

Letters from the Dominie



David de Forest Burrell

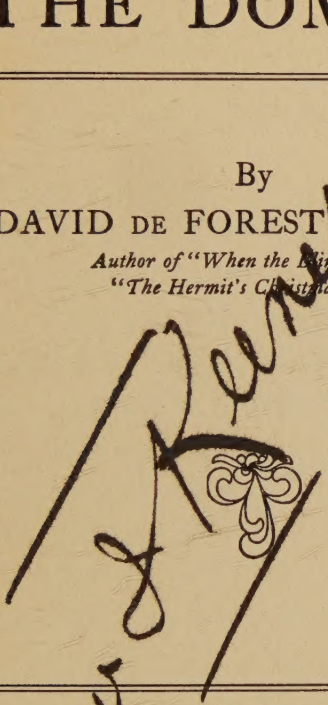


THE DOMINIE

LETTERS FROM THE DOMINIE

By
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"The Hermit's Christmas," etc.*



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FOREWORD

I hope you know the man to whom these letters were written. For he is a fine fellow, a strong, kindly, sensible, serviceable man. You will find him East and West, in country and city, in overalls and broadcloth. Indeed, it is good to reflect that he is far more numerous than some pastors, in blue moments, suppose.

The letters—one for every week in the year—were written to no one man in particular, but with many men in mind whom I have known and loved, with whom I have talked of the affairs of the Christian life and the present-day Church, knowing that their desire for the Kingdom is one with mine. They—the letters—are an attempt to convey to the mind of the devoted man in the pew

Foreword

the dominie's point of view on matters, small and great, germane to the Kingdom. And to this man they are dedicated, in the hope that, being born of one dominie's experiences and prayers, they may be of some small service in solving the problems of a busy life.

DAVID DE FOREST BURRELL.

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*The Manse,
January 1.*

My Dear Friend:

It is not every minister that has in his congregation some one who serves, as you serve me, as a safety-valve. Too often the man in the pulpit is not in a position to open his mind to any one—except his wife! These letters and talks that pass between you and me are a great relief to me. I cannot tell how you feel about them, but I dare to hope that you, in the pew, will not deem the ink wasted that gives you the point of view of the man in the pulpit.

So I shall keep on writing you every

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week; and I shall hope that somehow the miscellany may add a modicum to the happiness I wish you throughout the New Year.

Sincerely your friend,
The Dominie.

January 2.

Dear Friend:

Here is another year begun, and another host of New Year's wishes flying about us!

"If wishes were horses, beggars might ride." How many beggars would be galloping about our streets on a New Year's Day! Or, horses having gone utterly out of fashion, let us phrase it thus: "How many automobiles would be flying about town on the first day of the year—if wishes were cars!"

And yet—within limits—you can make

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certain oft-used New Year's wishes come true.

"A Happy New Year to you!"—so your friends have been greeting you. But you can do much to make their wish for you come true. You can begin the year by forbidding some things an entrance into it—some old habit, some little weakness or (to you) greater one, some unkindly spirit, some selfish viewpoint of long standing. Station yourself at the door of the year, keenly alert, courageous and determined enough to bar the way and cry to such, "No admission!"

Likewise, you can do much to further others' kindly wishes for you by heartily admitting some things, giving them the freedom of the year, presenting them, as it were, with the keys of the unknown city. Certain blessed habits of life—prayer, Bible study, church-going—be sure you open the door to

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them! Many a wish for your welfare will they help to realize. And "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law"; open you to them, therefore, with the opening year! They, too, will serve to make it a happy year indeed. Of what use to wish happiness to him who is determined to maintain the old grudges, to be governed by the same selfish spirit, that spoiled the last year for him?

So it seems, also, that you can be of the greatest assistance in making your own New Year's wishes for other people come true. "A Happy New Year to you!" Truly? Do you mean it? Then how far out of your way will you go to make it happy? You say it to the elevator boy. Will you prove the wish by any personal interest during the year? You say it to the ash-man, if you cross his dusty steps on New Year's Day.

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What will you really care about the ash-man? You say it to the servant in your house. What evidence is the New Year to see of your genuine interest in those who live under your roof-tree? You say it to your children. How far will you make day school and Sunday-school teachers your deputies for the care of their souls? You say it to your neighbors. Will the New Year find you with any more unselfish regard for them? And you express the same wish for the Church's New Year. What will you do to make your wish a reality?

For my part, *I* wish *you* a happy New Year, a genuinely happy one. You remember the "Happy Psalm"? It is that happiness I wish you: "Happy (that is the word) is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the Law of

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Jehovah. . . ." Oh, happy man! This is the very happiness possessed by Jesus: "*My meat* is to do the will of Him that sent me." Such abiding happiness I wish you.

May He who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," help us all to follow up our wishes with substantial proof of their genuineness!

Faithfully yours,
The Dominie.

January 9.

My Dear Friend:

Have you watched the building of our new postoffice? Day by day its walls have risen higher, day by day it draws nearer completion; and all because the men engaged on the work have been "on the job." The mortar-mixer has been at his place and has done his share; the hod-carrier has bal-

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anced his load and made his trips aloft over and again, all day long; the bricklayer has spread his mortar and eyed his plumb-line unceasingly; and the walls are going up.

There is not a member of this Church who, after serious consideration, will not agree that he is supposed to be a workman on the walls of Jerusalem; that is, that he is expected to be actually doing something for his Lord. He knew as much when he united with the Church; he made public promise to do his part of the work. There is no business obligation more sacred than the obligation which rests upon every Church member to do some specific work for the Head of the Church. The walls are going up; he has engaged himself as a workman; he is expected by Him whose edifice it is, to be busy; and he has been given to understand that he must give a reckoning at the proper time.

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I mention this not only because some people seem to forget it easily, but because definite, earnest work for Christ—real work—is so obviously the cure for many spiritual ills and wearinesses. I will guarantee that any sincere Christian who will discover a work to be done, and then set himself to do it, will find that he gets a new light on the Bible, on prayer, on the sermons he hears, and that he gains a new zest for life which no other tonic could give him. Spiritual torpidity is common. One good cure is—a specific task. ✓

Incidentally, some of our happiest workers are those whose work never brings them before the public eye. They do the things that do not show, these inconspicuous workers. God bless them! The Church could not live without them any more than without those more prominent.

You told me the other day you hadn't

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time or strength to go into religious work. If you are a Church member there is but one answer to this objection: You ought to make time and save strength for it. I except, of course, the few people who are occasionally and exceptionally restricted by emergencies in home or office. For the rest, a glance over your week's docket will show you hours of wasted and misused time, goodly supplies of wasted or misapplied energy, which ought to be diverted to channels of genuine Christian service in the Church and for the world. A little more system, a little better choice, a little sacrifice, and you will have time and strength at Christ's disposal. You tell me that you cannot make room for Church work in your overcrowded life. I tell you frankly, in reply, that if you value at all the allegiance you have sworn to the Head of the Church, you *must readjust matters, must rearrange* ✓

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your life, to make room for this great part of life's business.

And this Christian service is the *real business of life* for a Christian. Christ calls you to do more for Him than to merely earn your bread and butter. Stop and think: *are you actually doing anything at all for Him?*

Sincerely as always,
The Dominie.

January 16.

My Friend:

That was a wonderful experience we had at the great evangelistic meeting Friday night. I have had it in my mind ever since. I suppose you also have.

Novelty in religious matters is strangely startling. The method that is different, the manner that is unconventional, will always

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jar upon most of us. We are satisfied with doing "the proper thing," and are accordingly shocked by any overstepping of the bounds of what is customary. Perhaps you recall the man who, when told that he had appendicitis, looked up in the surgeon's face and asked, "Is an operation necessary?" "No," said the surgeon, "it is not necessary; it is customary." And many of us are willing thus to follow the conventions—at cost of an appendix or a soul. ✓

You were shocked at what you called "the capers" of the great evangelist we heard the other night. I can easily see why. You like a formal service; and you feel injured by any irregularity or interruption. You like a formal prayer, correct, chastely expressed, dignified; and you feel as if the man who addresses God with "You" instead of "Thou" were insulting God. I can imagine too (for we know each other well enough

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for this sort of talk) that you would shudder at the bare suggestion of an English Bible in our modern English.

There are many like you, easily shocked by unconventionality or novelty. When, in the pulpit of an ordinarily quiet, self-contained church, anything out of the ordinary is done, the same unpleasant effect is produced on a goodly number.

I hear you calling me a heretic, an iconoclast, when I say I cannot see the reasonableness of this attitude. Oh, yes, I love a beautiful, formal service as dearly as any High Churchman; and I am, too, a born (and bred) conservative, through and through; and yet the longer I preach, the more I minister to our good, conventional people, the more convinced am I that this sort of thing will never win the world. Indeed, I do not mind going further and saying that it is this very spirit of convention and propriety {

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that is tying up the gospel, throttling the Church!

I tell you, conventionality costs. It costs a great deal. I could name many who get absolutely nothing out of the Church service because the conventions in the Church where they worship have sapped all that was worth while in it. There are many to whom the Bible is a closed book because it is not given them in the English in which they think. There are others who have such a false reverence for the Bible that they treat it as a fetich instead of a fountain. There are still others who, though they say their formal prayers, never pray, just because they never talk their own simple language to God. Formalism and conventionality take the very life out of religion.

There is a good deal to be said, not for any irreverence toward anything sacred, but for a simple, straightforward dealing with God

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which can forget forms and ceremonies and plunge into the deep heart of things.

There is an unconventionality in religion that is undoubtedly wrong. It is that of the fakir, of the fanatic, who does that or says that which is clearly immoral or irreverent. ✓ Here is no question of good taste, mind you, but just the cleancut question of a breach of the moral law or an insult to God.

But there is a sort of unconventionality in religion into which the mere question of good taste enters. And here the answer to the charge of impropriety is easily found. Given a sufficient reason, many of the ordinary (and often arbitrary) conventions may be over-ridden without hesitation. David's wife Michal sneered at him for dancing before the ark when that sacred symbol was brought back home. And David said: "It was before Jehovah, who chose me, . . . to appoint me prince over the people of

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Jehovah. . . . And I will be yet more vile than this, and will be base in my own sight: but . . . I shall be had in honor!" There are times when it is not a man's business to bow to every convention, times when he ought to do the extraordinary and startling thing, if by doing it he can draw men to the service of God. So Paul said he was "willing to be all things to all men."

It is time for us to wonder if there is not often more hindrance than reverence in some of our conventions and our solemn proprieties. The one great thing is to reach men with the gospel. If we can do it to-day only after breaking through some of our time-honored Church customs, then the customs will have to be broken, that is all. We must reach men! We must set men afire! And if the usual formalities of the Church service, the customary method of attack, will not serve, then we must be willing to be

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mountebanks, if need be, for Christ's sake!

There is a man—I do not know his name—who stands on a soap-box every noon and preaches to the Wall Street crowds. I honor him; and—I make you my confessor—sometimes, skirting the crowd about him, I have felt myself futile. His soap-box on a street corner in the busy world puts my conventional pulpit to shame.

Sensationalism? There was a time when I was afraid of the word. You, old friend, are still in dread of it. It frightens me no longer; and I pray daily that you, and all the rest of my people, may see more clearly the purpose of the Church in the world. When you do, the old bugaboo of "propriety" will have no more power over you. That is proper in Church which will best serve to advance the Kingdom of your dear Lord and mine.

Cordially,
The Dominie.

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Dear Friend:

January 23.

You asked me the other day whether it was not hard to offer prayer in church.

It is hard. In fact, preaching is a simpler matter for a conscientious minister than praying—that is, praying in the church service. There are so many people in church, with so many things to be thankful for, so many wants to be filled, so many burdens to be lifted; and the man in the pulpit is only one man. It takes all one's power of sympathy, all one's deepest interest, to try to lay before the throne of grace all these longings and desires.

But if the dominie's part is a difficult one, the part of the man in the pew is no easier. It is hard to concentrate one's thoughts, harder to appropriate another's words. I have sat in the pew too often not to know the pull at one's eyelids, the paroxysm of rest-



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lessness that suddenly seizes upon mind and body during what the old-fashioned people call "the long prayer." And the voice heard from the pulpit does not always, for all the minister's desire, utter what is deepest in the silent worshipper's heart.

And yet it is not one man praying, but a congregation uniting in prayer. When you hear me say, "Let us unite in prayer," you may know that I mean exactly what I say. The glory of the situation lies in the unity of thought and desire on the part of the whole roomful. I am but your spokesman. We are all together talking with our Father concerning the deep, essential things of life! If a man can once force himself to remain conscious of this fact, the minister's prayer will be no longer to him a perfunctory part of the service. It will be worship in truth; and more, it will be fellowship.

There is another point. Your attitude to-

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ward the other folk in the pews has a great deal to do with your appreciation of the prayers from the pulpit. I know something about the silly old unchristian grudges and spites in some minds in the congregation; and I cannot for the life of me see how those who nurse them so tenderly can imagine that they are in a mood for prayer. How can Mrs. —— (I name no names) “unite in prayer” with Mrs. Blank when they dislike each other so cordially? How can a certain prosperous man “unite in prayer” with the man he is trying to “put one over on” in business? Oh, no! prayer in concert demands minds in harmony and hearts in sympathy. One ought to be able to say to himself, when part of the dominie’s prayer does not fit him at all, “Ah, but that’s a prayer for So-and-so, and there’s a petition for poor Such-and-such; and I’ll say ‘Amen’ to all!”

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Oh, my friend, when I pray from the pulpit, pray with me from the pew! Put your mind to it: it is *your* prayer, certainly some of it is; to what fits you, and to what fits others, say in your heart a strong "Amen!" which is to say, "So may it be!" Never leave yourself out of the blessed circle of those who truly pray together in church.

Heartily yours,
The Dominie.

January 30.

My Dear Friend:

My downtown luncheon with you on Friday was a great pleasure to me. It is hard nowadays for the parson to get in close touch with the men of his congregation, and he welcomes every opportunity. And you know how much easier it is to warm up over a good meal!

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Do you remember the "sandwich man" we passed as we came out of the restaurant? A poor broken remnant of a man, shabby, out at heels, red at nose, with a great oblong sign hanging from his neck in front and the mate to it hanging down behind. He advertised So-and-so's Blacking, or What's-his-Name's Dental Parlors, or something of that sort.

Verily; but he advertised other things, and most effectively too. I haven't been able to forget his looks. He was a walking recommendation of the terrors and pinchings of poverty; the truest "ad" in the world for the corner saloon; a living proclamation of the slavery of a vile habit. And he was doing all this advertising without knowing it! In fact, even if he did know it, he couldn't help himself!

This is not a sermon on bad habits. It is a talk on unconscious advertising as per-

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formed by all the members of this church.

Did it ever occur to you that you are a seven-days-a-week advertiser, for good or bad? You act as if you have done your full duty to the church when you have gone to the morning service on Sunday? Then Jones, your neighbor, reads your advertising and discounts the value of your church. You fail to use the Church Calendar? Jones reads, not the "Calendar," but your advertising of it as not worth reading. You ignore the evening service? So does Jones—on your advertising of its insignificance. You gossip about the affairs of your church, or decry the actions of some member or organization in it? Jones is there, reading your advertising and discounting your church. You insist upon "personal freedom," and deliberately continue the doing of things worldly or worse? Jones reads the signs, and on the basis of your advertis-

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ing he discounts not merely the power of your church for good, but the saving power of your Saviour, whom your advertising dishonors!

My friend, your sandwich man takes off his signboards at times, but you can't take yours off! You are a living advertisement for or against the Church and Christ Jesus.

What kind of advertising do you propose to do in the future?

Cordially yours,
The Dominie.

February 6.

My Dear Friend:

I have been reading an old story by way of preparation for the Sacrament, the story of the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness. No wonder the Fathers found in it such a symbol of the life of the godly man. What

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a fine parallel it is, with all its adventures, its misadventures, its various disciplines!

But the best of it is Elim.

A great horde of people, men, women and children, with their servants, their flocks and herds, their beasts of burden laden with all manner of household belongings, all trudging wearily along through mile after mile of dreary, sandy waste, with the hot sun beating down upon them, burning thirst parching their throats, children crying for a drop of water;—then, suddenly, above the shoulder of a sandhill, a glimpse of the slender green tops of palm-trees, a mad rush of the thirsty multitude, the sparkle of clear waters under the palms, the blessed feeling of cool water on parched tongue and throat! So “they came to Elim, where were twelve springs of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees: and they encamped there by the waters.”

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That is just what happens to those who rightly partake of the Lord's Supper. One of the oldest figures ever employed to describe life is the figure of a journey. It is accurate. We pass through the events of day after day as one passes along a highway, meeting all manner of adventures and people, confronting all sorts of obstacles; now finding the way smooth, now rough; and ever in need of rest and refreshment for body, mind and soul, ever seeking, consciously or unconsciously, the cooling waters of Elim. Our souls crave something different from what our work-a-day activities give, something far better, more substantial. We deal daily in things that parch our thirsty souls.

"What mean dull souls, in this high measure
To haberdash
In earth's base wares, whose greatest
treasure
Is dross and trash!"

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Let us be clear. It is not merely change, but genuine refreshment, life itself, that we need!

And this genuine increase of spiritual vitality is his who comes believing to the Lord's Table. The Lord's Supper has as truly a practical value in terms of spiritual life as had the springs of Elim in terms of physical life. It is not because it has a magic value in it; for it has none. It is because it is the picture, the symbol, of that which means life to the believer, the death of Jesus, who "bore our sins in His own body on the tree." It is because it is the Christ-given pledge of the forgiveness of our sins. It is because it is a real channel of Christ's grace. He who comes thoughtfully, prayerfully, expectantly to the Lord's Supper will have his parched soul refreshed.

"Thou of life the Fountain art,
Freely let me take of Thee.

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Spring Thou up within my heart;
Rise to all eternity!"

Cordially,
The Dominie.

February 13.

My Dear Friend:

Do you know that pleasant feeling of "letting down" at home?

Yesterday I called at a certain house whose head explained his very slipshod appearance with the remark that he thought a home was not a home if a man couldn't "let down" in it.

I agree with him—up to a certain point. If we have a right to ease and informality anywhere, it is at home. An easy jacket and slippers are symbols of one of the deepest pleasures of home, the right to relax, to ease off the tension of life.

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But there are too many husbands and wives who seem to feel that this privilege confers a license to do, and say, and be, a good many things which they would not dare abroad.

Some men, when they come home, proceed to "let down" with a vengeance. Throughout the day they have shown themselves considerate, careful of others' interests; but good manners are hung up on the hat-rack with their overcoats. The man who will not let his clerk wear his hat in the office will wear his own hat about the house in his wife's presence. With peculiar denseness he assumes that the affairs of the home are far beneath "business" in importance. Although at the office he is cool, temperate, patient, here at home he grumbles at his supper, growls at his wife, snaps at the children, feels privileged to lose his temper, and behaves on the whole more

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like a savage than a Christian gentleman.

"But she's my wife! They're my children!"

Precisely, and therefore entitled to every true courtesy. Whatever politeness a man shows to women outside of his home, he owes the same a hundred-fold to the one woman at home.

And the women? I am afraid that some of them seize the same unwarranted license. On their best behavior all day away from home, they have to "let down" on their return, if it is only to take their turn snapping at the younger generation—and the cook—or pouring out upon a tired husband's devoted head all the flood of petty ills and vexations accumulated during the day.

And the children? It goes without saying that they, too, learn to take full license in "letting down." Indeed, in too many homes they are taught that common phi-

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losophy which would have one easy set of manners for home use and another, very proper, very different, for use elsewhere. Whereas I have an idea that Jesus would expect a child to treat his own mother with as fine a courtesy as he would employ towards his hostess at a children's party.

What is back of it all? Partly pure selfishness. It is easier to "let down," to lose control, to slip to a lower level, than to be patient, considerate, kindly. And partly the reason is the superficiality of the good manners exhibited in public. They are "party manners," truly; they are never shown at home. But it is the real man, the real woman, that is disclosed by the "letting down" in the domestic circle. This Mr. Propriety and Mrs. Politeness who are seen abroad, so suave, so well-mannered, they are not the real people, but actors, made up for public view; at home, off come the masks!

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God save us from this life-on-two-levels! Let us be true Christian gentle-folk at heart, and save ourselves the trouble of putting on mask or "make-up" when we go abroad. *Semper idem!* It is a refinement of hypocrisy that cannot extend to those who should be dearest the same outward marks of regard and courtesy that are shown to others less near. Let us train ourselves to "let down" at home without falling below the proper level of followers of Him who "pleased not Himself."

Sincerely, as always,
The Dominic

February 20.

My Friend:

Not a hundred miles from my threshold there dwells a man of a certain peculiarity. It cropped out when the heavy snowfall

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came to an end yesterday. I happened to see him shovelling off his walk. When he reached the point where his walk ended and his neighbor's began, he very carefully lined it off with his snow-shovel, shovelled accurately to the line, then turned and marched back to the house in conscious rectitude. He had shovelled to the line, very careful not to clear an inch beyond it. He had done his share, precisely, fully; now let Mr. Neighbor look to his own share!

It happened that, a few minutes after this characteristic performance, I was glancing over a pamphlet that had come in the morning mail. I was struck by one pregnant sentence: "The very essence of the Christian spirit is going beyond what might justly be considered one's own part, picking up and carrying the load which others have selfishly or carelessly thrown off."

That is true. In the matter of Christian

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service the attitude we too often take is that of my neighbor—very much afraid that in shovelling our own sidewalk we may inadvertently go an inch or two beyond our line and clean that much of our neighbor's walk. We are so fearful lest inadvertently we might do a little more church work than some one else. We excuse ourselves, on that ground, from larger activity. "There is Mr. Idle; he has more time than I have; why don't you ask him to do this work? No use asking me to do more; I won't take on any extra work until I see Mr. Sloth and Mrs. Froth doing more than they are doing."

When it comes to giving do we not follow out the same silly course of reasoning? Our standard of comparison is the giving of our neighbors. "Don't ask me to give any more money to benevolences until Mr. Mean begins to give something." "There's

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Mr. Wealthy; he has ten times my income, and I'm giving more now than he is." And so it goes: we compare our gifts with our neighbors', coming to the very satisfactory conclusion that we are "doing our share, if not more than our share."

God forgive us, this is no way in which to approach the Saviour's business! It is not a question of "giving our share," but a question of giving and doing all we can. "Who-soever would save his life" (being careful to do no more than his share) "shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life" (spending it without stint, without comparison with his neighbor's service) "for My sake, shall find it."

Imagine—if you can—our Saviour viewing his redemptive work with the same calculating eye with which we view our work for Him! "Empty myself? Take the form of a servant? Be made in the likeness

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of men? Humble myself? Become obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross? Why should I? It is more than my share."

That was not Christ's way: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich." Nor is it the way of the Christian: "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be servant of all." In this service there is no place for "comparative tables." The sole question, in relation to gifts and work, is the one the individual must put to his own heart: "Am I doing as much, giving as much, as I can?"

Sincerely your friend,

The Dominie.

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February 27.

My Friend:

Somehow it irritates me almost unreasonably to find a man of your calibre skeptical or merely cold on the subject of foreign missions. It argues a distorted vision.

Much depends on how far one can see clearly. If the submarine had good eyesight it would be a thousandfold more effective. The locomotive must have not only a skilled hand on the throttle, but a pair of clear, vigilant eyes at the window. And the Church, to be most effective, must be possessed of a multitude of men and women who can see around the world.

That is the range of the true Christian's vision—around the world, no less. For that was the range of Jesus' vision when he established his Kingdom—"all the world, . . . the whole creation." That was the

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range of prophetic vision before Jesus: "All nations shall serve Him; . . . all nations shall call Him happy." That was the range of apostolic vision after Jesus: "The gospel . . . is the power of God unto salvation . . . to the Jew, and also to the Greek." Paul's vision embraces Asia Minor, reaches out to Macedonia, on to Italy, Spain—where will this end? There is no end save "the ends of the earth." Christian vision sees a world hungry for the Saviour, and a Saviour hungry for the world.

The eyesight of some of the women of this church has been growing sharper during this past year. The meetings of the Missionary Society and the Federation for Mission Study have been of inestimable value in correcting vision. To-day in this congregation eyes that were formerly focused always on the near foreground, eyes that never

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saw at a distance, are seeing around the world.

The woman who congratulates herself that she is broadminded because she fixes her eyes on local interests, pitying her narrow sister who works in the Missionary Society, has much to learn. For breadth and depth of human interest commend me, every time, to the woman whose eyes are adjusted to objects not only near but afar, the woman who sees as Jesus sees, around the world.

And what is true of our women ought even more to be true of the men. The average man has, I think, a broader vision than the average woman, simply because his world is a larger world. He ought, therefore, to be the more willing to cultivate a vision of a world-encircling gospel. Yet you, with others of our thinking, successful men, so broad-minded in other fields, decline to be interested. As I said, it irri-

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tates me, it is so unreasonable for a Christian man!

I once heard a great man say that mission study was the most broadening influence to be had. Ex-President Taft and ex-President Roosevelt say practically the same thing. It is true. Jesus cries to the Church, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields"; and that particular congregation that lifts up its eyes and looks beyond its own parish, beyond its own land, beyond the seas, girdling the earth with its vision, is absolutely sure to be bigger, stronger, kindlier, more zealous, more successful than its near-sighted neighbor. There is small Christianity in a vision like that of Longfellow's children at their porridge:

"Steadfast they gaze, yet nothing see
Beyond the horizon of their bowls;
Naught care they for the world that rolls

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With all its freight of human souls,
Into the days that are to be."

Man, man, look up! Look out over the world! Train your eyes to see as the Saviour sees! With all my heart I urge you, as a thoughtful and capable man, to look seriously into this matter of missions. Read up on it. Listen to the statesmanlike addresses you can hear on it. Invest in it. And this for your own development as well as for the sake of the Kingdom of Christ.

Yours as always,
The Dominie.

March 5.

Dear Friend:

So you think me unpractical because I insist that it may be a man's duty to throw away his ballot by voting for some one who

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cannot be elected rather than vote for a less fit man?

I am not so sure. There is a high idealism that has been the glory of our nation and is its glory in this world-crisis. And I believe that what I advocate may become, at the ballot box, the duty of every high-souled citizen.

I found a brother minister last week preparing to speak to his people on "The Efficient Ballot." That is a fine phrase, worth remembering—and applying. You say your ballot is efficient because you vote for a man who, while you do not approve of his affiliations and record, has nevertheless a good chance of being elected. I say that, on the contrary, the ballot's efficiency is to be measured by the principles for which the candidate stands, no matter what his chance of being elected.

In 1858 my grandfather voted for Lin-

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coln against Douglas, and—as his neighbors told him—“threw away his vote” on a beaten candidate. But in 1860 he voted for Lincoln; Lincoln went into the White House; and ever after my grandfather was proud of the fact that he had cast his ballot in '58 for the man who was the right man, though he was sure of defeat.

Was that first vote thrown away? Not a bit of it! A vote cast for the right man, despite the outcries of all the prophets of “expediency,” is never thrown away. It is cast on God’s side, and God will win out in the long run.

We want the right to triumph, you and I. We are after righteousness and justice, and we must vote, not for what will give us a little temporary relief, but for what will, in the long run, bring in the reign of right.

“Woe betide us everywhere,” cried Carlyle, “when for this reason or for that we

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fail to do justice! No beneficence, benevolence, or other virtuous contribution will make good the want. And in what rate of terrible geometrical progression, far beyond our poor computation, any act of Injustice once done by us grows! . . . Justice, justice, in the name of Heaven, give us justice, and we live; give us only counterfeits of it, . . . and we die!"

It is not only nonsense, it is wrong, to tell me that, though I know Mr. Logroller to be a bad man, I ought to vote for him "to keep the other side out," or "to keep from wasting my vote." As an honest citizen and a Christian I must vote for the individual men who will, to my mind, give the State the cleanest and best government; and I must do this regardless of their chances of election.

"Oh, blest is he who can divine
Where real right doth lie,

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And dares to take the side that seems
Wrong to man's blindfold eye!

"For right is right, since God is God;
And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin!"

Yours,
The Dominie.

March 12.

My Dear Friend:

You ask about tithe-giving. I can only answer that I wish all of our people were *at least* tithe-givers. The tithe was the *minimum* required of the Israelite; but I am convinced that practically all of our people could and should give to God *more* than a tithe of their income. The law of Christian giving is not the law of the Old Dispensation, requiring an arbitrary tenth for

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God, but the law of the New Dispensation, requiring what burning heart and enlightened conscience and consecrated will shall feel it right to give.

Christian giving is always systematic and proportionate. So Paul wrote: "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper." That is business-like; and the best type of Christian is business-like in all things. I cannot understand the lack of method shown by so many men when they deal with the Lord in financial matters. They are slipshod and negligent, as they would be with no human party to a financial arrangement. And many of them, if they give systematically, do it out of their surplus—what they can spare to God!

But—give a tithe as a minimum? Isn't that a good deal? Well, God and God's Kingdom can be done justice to only in one

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way. God's proper proportion of a man's income must be *at least* enough to prove a generous recognition both of God's bounteous dealings with the man himself and of the imperative demands of the work of God's Kingdom.

Our people, for all their small incomes, are well-to-do—they can all give God a tithe; some can give Him a full half; but—they are not ready, because they think they need the money more than God needs it.

There's the rub, and there's my hint at the third essential. Christian giving must come, in the nature of the case, from a consecrated heart that desires God's glory above all things else. That was the trouble with the rich men whose gold coins Jesus heard clattering so loudly into the brazen trumpets of the Temple treasury. Mind you, they were systematic and proportionate in their

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giving; and, like a certain other Pharisee whom Jesus described, they presumably gave more than the minimum tithe. But they gave selfishly, for their own glory; while the poor widow gave her all out of a spiritual compulsion.

I recall a meeting with one of my ushers after church one Sunday. He was smiling broadly, and he told me why. A certain member, a woman who owned eight fine farms, had been in church that morning. He had noticed the gusto with which she sang the hymn before the offering,—

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

And then—“I passed the plate down her aisle, and she put in five cents!”

I didn't laugh with him. I can't laugh

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over it even now. Why, if that woman had ever caught a glimpse of what Jesus had done for her; if she had ever had a suspicion of the "riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints"; if she had had the smallest conception of the meaning of "life eternal" to a dying world, could she have given to God thus? Christians through-and-through, dead in earnest as Henry Martyn, find the clasps of their pocket-books flying open for God; for they have consecrated those pocket-books, with themselves, to Him.

Sincerely as always,
The Dominie.

March 19.

My Friend:

A certain good hausfrau has driven me from my study. I write with difficulty, pad

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resting on a window-ledge. I cannot find my ink-bottle. My desk is piled high with books, and my shelves are empty. On the study floor is a great heap of papers, magazines, boxes, pencil-stubs, and what not, all of which articles the good wife has doomed to exile. For this is the strenuous but inevitable season of Spring housecleaning!

How things do accumulate in our homes! When all the closets and cupboards, the nooks and corners, are emptied of their agglomerated stores, what a sight is there! Clothes worn and half-worn; books that failed to interest; pictures with broken glass or disjointed frames; magazines and newspapers by the score; a broken umbrella; some cracked plates—what a load of trash! Out it goes, to the ashman's wagon or (How generous we are with what we no longer want!) to the Salvation Army: anywhere, so

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long as we are rid of it! And the house is so clean and neat: the trash is gone!

But how about a little spiritual house-cleaning? Strange, was it not, that the last two speakers in our Men's Club Course told us the same hard truth, that the greatest hindrance and menace to the Church of to-day is undoubtedly the worldliness of our Christian people.

I have been trying to look through the closets and cupboards of my soul; I suppose you too try it at times. It is good discipline. How startled a man is when he runs across a habit he thought he had thrown away years before! What a lot of trash the human mind and heart can accumulate, their owner all unconscious of the fact! But I can not think it strange when I consider the distinctively worldly nature of our daily life, and the amount of newspaper and magazine trash we absorb as mental and

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spiritual pabulum. The consequence of "stocking up" with trash is a superabundance of—trash, of course.

Look around in the cupboards and shelves of your soul, my friend. Anything there that takes up valuable space and does no good? Any trash there? Then why not, by God's grace, clean house? You will enjoy living with yourself far more; and you will have so much more room for the things worth while.

Your friend,
The Dominie.

March 26.

Dear old Friend:

I was greatly chagrined when you said—so easily, too—that you were not expecting to attend the Annual Meeting of the church. You are one of the consistent givers, and you

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have always shown a certain interest in church affairs; and your remark rather "flabbergasted" me. It cannot be possible that we must provide a sideshow of some sort to draw such men as you!

I know what so many of our people are saying. They say it every year:

"What's the use? Why should I take the trouble to go to the Annual Meeting? It's all cut and dried anyhow. The nominees are all hand-picked. And annual reports bore me."

There is something wrong with the person who holds such an attitude. Some people stay away because they are afraid their personal abilities are not going to be recognized as they should be. I should be ashamed to think that any one in this church could be animated by such feelings; for personal ambition ought never to cross the church's threshold. And some stay away

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because they think "the machine" is running things. But there is no "machine" in this church. The men now in office are more likely than others to know what men are suitable and ready for their respective Boards; still, any one entitled to vote is entitled to nominate any one else for office. That is so, I think, in most churches. Yet you do not refuse to vote in national elections because you did not personally nominate the candidates. The great guaranty against "church politics" is the participation of all the people in such meetings as the one now approaching.

Some stay away because they have other engagements, or are too tired, or do not care to spend an evening on reports and the like. I sincerely hope that you are not in this class of indifferents. Annual reports as to the progress of your church ought to interest you deeply. If they do not, it is be-

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cause you have forgotten whose the church is and what it stands for. To say that an Annual Meeting bores you is to admit that you do not care whether your Saviour's Kingdom is advanced in your community. I hope you are unwilling to make such an admission.

Why attend? For at least four good reasons:

1. To fulfill your honest obligation. You, a member of this church, are pledged to such support; and you will keep your pledge. If only an attendant and contributor, you would be still under obligation, having enjoyed the hospitality of the church.

2. To get information. The annual reports of our Boards and Societies contain facts which ought to interest any one interested in the church.

3. To render service. Your attendance alone adds to the weight of the meeting; and

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your advice, your protest or approval, your vote, all have weight. *You are needed.*

4. To cement the congregation more closely together, and to prove your lively and warm interest in your fellow-members.

Take a red-hot coal out of the grate and put it alone on the hearth, and it will soon grow cold and dead. For your sake and the church's sake, keep in touch, that you may keep on fire. Come to the Annual Meeting, and come prayerfully and seriously, prepared not to criticise but to help. *You are needed.*

Cordially yours,
The Dominie.

April 2.

Dear Friend:

Sometimes I wish that every member of our church could have a turn at sitting

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through a service in the pulpit. The man who sits there sees so many, many things—little things, usually, but characteristic—that those in the pews fail to observe. Small mannerisms, little accidents and incidents, signs of interest, of indifference, all are so easily caught by the dominie's eye.

You will wonder what I am leading up to. Well, I am thinking of what I see at every Communion Service. A certain few (chiefly men who claim intellectual superiority) stand with closed lips while the congregation repeats the Apostles' Creed. They rather pity the credulous who blindly follow outworn dogma; rather plume themselves on their own emancipation!

That seems to me a vital mistake.

A creed is a definite summary of what one believes. Just as a man lives by faith, guides himself by convictions and axioms on every side of his life, by the same token he

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must have a creed for every side of it. I have my creed in politics, in business, in social life, in religion. If I do anything in the way of thinking before I act, I am sure to have such creeds. President Emeritus Eliot of Harvard defines his new religion, explicitly barring creeds and dogmas; but that very definition is a creed, of which that prohibition is a part! Thinking men must formulate their thought and must summarize it.

And, beyond the fact that creed-making is thus spontaneous, it has great positive value. My creed clarifies my faith and strengthens it as well; for the very process of assembling my beliefs does for them as a whole what the assembling room does for wheels, rods, and cylinders: it puts them in working order.

It puts me where I belong, too. It will put me, if it is the creed of a Christian, in

the Church, among those who agree with me on all essentials, who will be therefore the most congenial and helpful company.

And it stiffens my backbone, enabling me to find in myself a greater degree of moral courage than the man of vague ideas and many doubts can possess.

And then it helps me to do better work for Christ. If you look abroad over the Church you will find that its best work has throughout the centuries been done by men and women of the strongest evangelical convictions.

As to the Apostles' Creed, it is the simplest and most comprehensive of the great creeds the Church has produced. In it are to be found most of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. It is for this reason more widely used to-day than at any time in the fifteen centuries since its birth. We use it, not for any magical value in such things, not

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in mere slavish repetition of our fathers' words, but because we think it an exceptionally accurate statement of the great saving truths of Scripture. The one statement over which we stumble concerns Christ's "descent into hell." We need not stumble even here, for the word "hell" to our forefathers of early England meant the whole realm of departed spirits, the very realm described by the New Testament word "Hades."

There is a great deal of nonsense spoken to-day about doing away with creeds. It is an impossibility, an inconceivable thing; if it could be done, it would be a fatal thing to do. God give us men and women who know the great truths which are in the Bible; who think clearly enough on religious matters to be able to summarize them; who are not afraid to repeat the creed of their fathers if it happens to be their own!

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The difficulty, in the case of the men I have spoken of, is due largely, not to their unbelief (I happen to be acquainted with the convictions of some of them), but to their blind adoption of the slogan of the age—"Down with dogma!" Creeds are not the fashion; therefore they, following the fashion, are above creeds, and above us who can still repeat them.

It is a fundamental mistake. Truth *will* shape itself definitely; cognate truths *will* flock together like birds of a feather; and it is a most inspiring and helpful event when a churchful of people will with one voice and one heart repeat a summary of their great Faith. And incidentally it is the makers and adherents of the creeds who have moved the world. They are the men of purpose and of inextinguishable vigor.

Heartily yours,

The Dominie.

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April 9.

My dear Man:

I have just had a delightful experience. I have been in a house with a church in it. I remember—in Antwerp, I think it was—a church with a ring of houses around it; but this was quite different, a house with a church in it. You know the house. It is one where you, too, like to drop in. It has “atmosphere.”

When Paul sent greetings to the Church in Rome he bade the elders bear his salutation to Aquila and Priscilla “and the church that is in their house.” That church was, of course, composed of the Christians of the neighborhood, who were wont to gather in the home of Aquila and his good wife. But without doubt the family altar of that godly couple was the nucleus and center of the little church. And, equally without doubt,

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the living nuclei of the church in this village are the family altars of her members.

The warmth and liveliness of our churches, the genuineness and hearty activity of local Christianity, depend more upon the cherishing of a true religious life in our homes than upon any one other thing. A church is like a spring-fed lake, the wholesomeness of whose waters is impaired the moment the myriad springs along its shores lose aught of their purity and sweetness. There is a great and immediate need for a deeper, better religious life in many a church member's home for the sake of that home and for the church's sake.

Of all the ways in which to secure such a life there is one of inestimable value: it is the observance in heart as well as in words of old-fashioned "family prayers." If I were asked to name the one thing that would most quickly put new life into this partic-

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ular church, I should say, without hesitation, "Family worship."

But you are too busy? Not too busy, certainly, for the most vital business of life? There is nothing so beautiful, so beneficial, so essential to the life of those in your home, as the right development of their spiritual nature; and that depends largely on what some folks sneer at as a "form" of religion, on "family prayers." This brings the members of the household together before the throne of grace; it makes them intimate in the deepest and best things of life; it forces them to face the great problems of life, and provides them with a God-given solution for them; it enlarges their sympathies and kindness not only toward each other, but toward others outside the home; it destroys that bugbear, embarrassment, which assails so many Christians when religion is mentioned; it prepares for office and shop, for

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school and playground, for day and night, for joy and sorrow. I submit to you that no Christian ought to be too busy to find time for so valuable a thing as this.

But still you are very busy? Yes; but there are various ways of solving this problem of "family prayers."

A few of our people have time for it immediately before or after breakfast; and others can make time then, by retiring and rising ten minutes earlier. Some have time in the evening, when all the family can be together; but the old-fashioned evening of this sort is out of fashion, sad to say. One or two of our families have the Bible at the breakfast-table, and turn the breakfast "blessing" into brief "prayers"; and this can easily be done in many a home. And others get at it in other ways. It can be done, and done in every Christian home, not in a mere rattle of empty words of Scripture and

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prayer, but sensibly, reverently, helpfully, even if ever so briefly.

But it is quite possible that you do not have "prayers" at home, not because you are busy but because you are afraid! or ashamed! Is that it? Then I entreat you, in the name of all that is best in life, in the name of your Lord Jesus, to get you a new courage, that you may "speak a guid word for Jesus" in your own home.

How pathetically did "puir Robbie Burns" carry through those later dreary years the memory of a family circle he had known:

"The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearin' thin an' bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion
glide,

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He wales a portion with judicious care,
And 'Let us worship God!' he says, with
solemn air."

Oh, man, if your religion is worth anything, it is worth dealing with in plain and hearty terms at your own fireside!

Cordially,

The Dominie.

April 16.

My Friend:

Like you, I have been reading, during these days before Easter, the story of the Saviour's last week before his death. It makes one think mighty seriously. What indomitable purpose! What unequalled self-denial! What unqualified love!

You say you are puzzled by that strange and terrible cry from the cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

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You are by no means the first to wonder at it. Indeed, there are those who, unable to fit it into their conception of the salvation wrought out by Jesus, simply cut it out of their Bibles. To my mind, however, it is the key to the whole riddle of the cross and to the whole earthly mission of the Saviour.

You tell me you can easily conceive of Jesus as forsaken by his followers when He reaches the—to them—incomprehensible failure of crucifixion; but you cannot think of Him as forsaken by his Father?

Yet right there is the unlocking of the whole mystery. This agonized, appalling cry is the most significant of the Seven Words on the Cross, unless one except the triumphal "It is finished!"

Clearly he is in dead earnest. There are those who would have us suppose that he was playing a part. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It is the third hour

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of the day; he is almost *in articulo mortis*; and men do not pose on the cross, in the moment of death. No. Jesus' cry is genuine, heart-deep; he actually feels that the Father has forsaken him.

But this is the very opposite of what we should expect of Jesus. Any other man might feel such spiritual darkness closing thick about him in the Valley of the Shadow; but Jesus, the Son of God, why should he so agonize? All his days, yea, through all eternity, he has rejoiced to do his Father's will; and on his head once and again has the heavenly benediction fallen, "Thou art my beloved Son. In Thee I am well pleased." We should expect him, in this awful crisis, to be above our weaknesses, to be conscious every moment of the Father's presence and aid. Yet the cry rings out from the cross, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?"

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There is only one explanation: The Father has actually hidden his face from him. The darkness that lies over Jerusalem is as nothing to this terrible blackness in the Saviour's soul. The sneers and gibes of the priests, the desertion of the fickle crowd, the physical agony of death, throbbing nerves, aching muscles, parched throat, failing heart—all these are insignificant in comparison with the consciousness that the Father has withdrawn his comforting and sustaining presence.

And there is only one conceivable reason why that presence should be thus withdrawn: Jesus is the representative of a sinful world, and he "bears our sins in his own body on the tree." It is guilt alone from which the Father withdraws himself. From Jesus, the sin-bearer, the Father's face is turned away. For one dreadful moment "He that sent" Him is not "with" Him.

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The Savior is alone. This is the climax of the sacrifice, the bitterness of the cup He willed to drink.

And the Christ endures even this for us! We are used to separation from God, terribly, shamefully used to it; it seems the normal thing; but to Jesus it is awful, horrible. Yet for our sakes he drinks even these bitterest dregs of his cup.

“Had ever love such proving?
Was ever love so priced?
Oh, what is all our loving
Compared with Thine, O Christ!”

It is this that makes the Saviour's outcry so poignantly significant. It is the revelation of the full weight of the burden of our guilt, the measure of our debt to Him, our Sacrifice.

Sincerely,
The Dominie.

Easter, April 23.

Dear Friend:

I have just come from a home at whose doors, as the Arabs say, the Black Camel has knelt; and I have witnessed something I have seen before but can never understand. Why should Christian people, when one of their own is taken Home, grieve as if Easter meant nothing to them?

One of the puzzling things about our present-day Christianity is the strange ease with which some people accept the facts of the Faith and yet refrain from applying those facts. Such a theoretical or nominal Christianity is a common spectacle; and it leaves the life barren and cheerless.

For example, there is the fact of Jesus' resurrection. It is the best authenticated fact in history. It is accepted as a fact by Mr. Nominal and Mrs. Superficial. "On

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the third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty." They repeat the words, they acknowledge their assurance that Jesus rose;—and then what?

Then, when some skeptic casts suspicion on the old gospel, they begin to doubt, though the resurrection of Jesus is the proof of the truth of his Gospel, as He said it would be: "There shall no sign be given but the sign of Jonah the prophet: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Thus did Jesus risk the authenticity of his gospel on the fact of his resurrection.

And these people seem to live as if this present existence were all that they had and

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it must be made the most of. "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die." They throw themselves into worldly pleasures; they fix their hearts on earthly treasures; they spend themselves on transient and ultimately worthless pursuits, though the resurrection of Jesus ought to have opened their eyes to the value of eternal realities and spiritual ambitions. His rising is the seal set to Jesus' words: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."

And these people, nominal believers in Jesus' resurrection, behave like utter unbelievers when death enters their family circle. They rebel against it, complain of God, mourn as if death ended all, cover themselves over with garments the gloomiest conceivable, "sorrow as the rest, who have no hope," though "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are

fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

For this is the one overwhelming, joyful thing about Easter: that the resurrection of Jesus is simply a historical fact, established, by the plainest and strongest and most plentiful proofs, just as every other fact of history is established. That great expert on legal evidence, Blackstone, declares that no other fact in history is so well authenticated. There is every reason why you, a rational being, should believe that Jesus rose; for the fact is established by the usual and rational processes of verification.

And it is not only a fact, but it is the most powerful fact in the world. It verifies the gospel of the atonement; it certifies the present value of spiritual things; it takes from death its terrors, establishing the reality of heaven and the certainty of immortality.

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What is needed is just the common sense that makes men act upon a settled truth. That, I take it, is the faith that counts. Some Christians lack the most precious gifts and comforts and incentives of their religion simply because they do not apply it to their own daily needs. "But now is Christ risen!" That ought to make a vast difference in us.

"There is no death! What seems so is transition.

This life of mortal breath
Is but the suburb of the life Elysian,
Whose portal we call Death."

Thus being certified of many things, we have a right, even in our deepest bereavements, to rejoice on Easter Day.

"Christ the Lord is risen to-day!
Sons of men, and angels, say;
Raise your joys and triumphs high!
Sing, ye heavens! and, earth, reply!"

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And after? Live as one who lives for ever, as one who expects soon to end his apprenticeship, to meet the Master face to face, to serve Him eternally. Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead? Then live your convictions!

A blessed Easter to you and yours!

The Dominie.

April 30.

Good Friend:

It warmed my heart to see you bring your week-end guests to church last Sunday morning.

I have an idea that the Sunday visitor furnishes a fine test of the depth of our Christian convictions and the warmth of our interest in the house of God. Like many other incidentals of modern life, he fur-

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nishes us with both a temptation and an opportunity.

How frequent he is nowadays—and his family with him! We must not forget the family; for they all come together. Suddenly they appear. They seem to drop out of the sky as if by a Zeppelin. They fall into the Christian home as a sort of bomb-shell, upsetting the usual and proper order of things, making wreckage—I speak advisedly—of the day. The host and his family had at least a mild expectation of going to church. If the visitors arrive in the morning, that expectation ceases; the larder is emptied; the good wife spends the morning in the kitchen while her husband looks after the guests; a table groaning with good things is set and cleared; an hour is spent at the kitchen sink; the rest of the afternoon is given over to trivial talk, with multitudinous cigars for the men. If the guests

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arrive in the afternoon, the same sequence of events is followed, running late into the evening. Sunday is gone; nothing is gained; many things absolutely necessary to genuine Christian living are lost; and the thermometer of spirituality in that house registers a considerable drop, which drop is more than likely to be permanent. Instead of breathing a bit of the air of heaven, the members of this family have breathed all day the heavy, dead air of the world; and they and the church pay the penalty.

It is our only chance to see these friends? I doubt it, in most cases. Saturday is a half-holiday for most people. And even if Sunday were our only chance, it would still be in order for us to keep first things first. Thus:

Attend to our Sunday duties and privileges without fail. If we stand pledged to support the services of our church, or to

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teach in our Sunday-school, or to take part in our Young People's Meeting, then such engagements, to the honest mind, take precedence of all else.

But our guests? I have not forgotten them. It is our place—and our privilege—to tell them of our obligation, and to invite them to come with us. Hospitality has no rights beyond that. The guest who expects us to break sacred engagements and ignore sacred duties just for the sake of his company is guilty of a flagrant breach of good manners. The burden is on his shoulders, not ours. Let our Christian people drop that apologetic air with which they have been wont to mention their church-membership; let them put first things first, and take an honest pride in fulfilling their duty to their church and their Lord.

That is why the cockles of my heart were warmed when I saw you bring your guests

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to church. I felt that you esteemed the church and your faith at their proper value. Your guests felt it as well, I am sure.

Cordially,
The Dominie.

May 7.

My dear Man:

You and I are old enough friends to permit of my speaking plainly about some things.

I was distressed to hear you say, in our discussion last night, that you had long ago dropped the habit of private prayer and meditation.

"Timothy Kilbourn," in a recent publication speaks of men who have lost the key to the closet door. I thought of his words when you spoke; for I think you put yourself in their class. I thought afterwards of

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many people I have known, and I said to myself, "That key, to the place where men go to pray alone with God, is one of the strongest tests of a man's life and religion."

And I think still that I was right.

Take out your key-ring, my friend, and look it over:

There is the key to your front door, worn and shiny. You use it daily.

And the key to the office door or the shop door? Worn, and shining bright.

And the key to the cash-box in the safe? Just like the others.

There is the thin little key to your safe-deposit box—rather new, scarcely worn, with little dots of rust on it.

There is the key to the tool-chest that used to be your hobby before you became such a busy man—look at it now, a rusty brown.

Your key-ring is an index to your life.

And the key to the place where you used

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to go apart to be with God, to think on high and holy things and to speak with your Father—take a look at it. Its condition, my friend, will be a very true index to your condition. How does it look—rusty? or worn and clean-shining?

Not there? You've lost it? You really mean that you have in your day no moment when you are alone with God? Where has that key gone? Down the well of knowledge, so-called? thrown into the sea of pleasure? forgotten in the whirlpool of business? Where is it? And how, how do you expect to go on living without it?

What does it do? There have been volumes—libraries!—written about the accomplishments of prayer. Whenever the crop reports indicate a drought in the wheat-belt the newspapers report concerted prayer by the farmers for rain; and then they proceed to argue editorially as to the benefits of

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prayer. Often-times the argument ends with the patronizing encouragement to Christians—and others—to go on praying, because the reflex action of prayer on the mind is beneficial! Pray, not because you stand a chance of having your prayers answered, but because by praying you put yourself in a calm and hopeful frame of mind!

What a noble philosophy! As if prayer were a new sort of static machine; or, say, a new kind of gymnastic apparatus, to be used to build up the muscles or bring an end to brain-fag—and no more!

That prayer, even with but a modicum of faith, does calm and clarify the mind, every one knows. So does solitude, away from the city, under the blue sky. But is that all? What mockery is this, to urge me to pray for my own sake, though my prayer can never be answered by the machine! As

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well urge a wrecked sailor, a thousand miles from a rescue, to swim because it strengthens the muscles!

Jesus' philosophy of prayer is that which is summed up in two words of his: "When ye pray, say, 'Our Father.'" We do not pray to the machine: we pray to the God above and controlling the machine. We do not pray just for mental and spiritual exercise; we pray because prayer is the intercourse of earthly children with their Heavenly Father. The relationship, according to Jesus, is precisely like that existing between us and our children—only that God is wiser, kindlier, more just than any earthly father. Can God answer prayer? "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

That ends it. Pray, my friend, not for

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the reflex action of prayer, but out of a great need and a greater assurance. God hears. God answers.

And God expects you to pray. Oh, there's the trouble; we do not fulfill God's expectation. The normal Christian life is a life of constant prayer, of daily and oft-repeated communion with God. That is what we lack. Pray more earnestly! more expectantly! more frequently! and forget not—as Jesus forgot not—your church and your neighbor in your prayers.

Dear friend, if that key is gone—as you say it is—you'd better get it back; learn again to pray. Shine it by hard usage. If it grows bright and worn I know what your life will be, a life of contentment and peace, a life of faith and hope, the best sort of life ever lived. I think—I am confident—that some of the crow's-feet will disappear from your face, some of your chronic anxie-

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ties vanish utterly, if you will try this out.

Sincerely, as always,
The Dominie.

May 14.

My Friend:

I wonder if the complexion of the congregation this last week or two has brought to your mind what it has kept jingling in mine?

"The first of May
Is Moving Day."

At this season, every year, the Newcomers arrive. All through the land, I imagine, the same spring shifting of population occurs. Most of the towns and villages that are not suburban have been developing little manufacturing industries; and to and

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from city, suburb, and industrial town come and go the moving households.

What a complication they add to an already complicated problem! You may not have felt it as the dominie has; but to me Mr. Newcomer and his family (a weighty sign of the times!) are fresh puzzles every year.

They must be assimilated into the life of the community. The community! Are we that? We are to a large degree merely a boarding-house for commuters; then there is still the element-descended from the Fathers of the Town; next, add to your tally some hundreds of colored folk, with as many more Italians and other foreigners. Jumble all together; take out a few every year; put in some newcomers; complicate the whole with all manner of tastes, occupations, faiths and morals; and this—a community! Save the mark!

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Yet that is what it once was, and what it will be again at no distant date, please God; but it is hardly a community just now. A community is, to be exact, a place where people have common interests and feel a common obligation; and such a place this is not, in this day. Our social life, our civic affairs, our church life, do not yet measure up to the standard; for there is one thing not widely enough nor earnestly enough practised by us all, one thing that is an essential in a "community."

That one thing is neighborliness, without which no aggregation of people can be called a community. Archbishop Trench said it was "a debt which we must be content to be ever paying and have never paid." We live too much on the give-and-take basis; what we need is that quality of kindly interest in those about us which asks no return and expects none. And we pick and

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choose our neighbors too much; what we need is an unaffected, simple neighborliness that serves all kinds of neighbors. "Love is like the sun, which does not ask on what it shall shine, or what it shall warm, but shines and warms by the very law of its own being."

And the people who ought to afford the best example of neighborliness are the members of our churches. Christ gives us no option as to our neighbors. He does not permit us to choose them. Our friends are the few who, perhaps, are congenial with us; but our neighbors are those, regardless of wealth or position or culture, in whose midst God has set us down. We are under obligation to know them, to sympathize with them, to serve them. It will not hurt you to do what your Lord could afford to do. If you do it, this place will more nearly deserve to be called a "community."

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The corollary is this: that such true neighborliness must show itself in church if anywhere. The constant temptation of a congregation is to regard itself as a "happy family," complete, self-sufficient. I used to know one church that complacently gave itself that very title. It almost killed the church. No; it is our business to give the Newcomer family the best the church has,—pews, service, interest, neighborly affection. It is not enough that your pastor should spend his afternoons calling on the newly arrived and inviting them to come to church. You men in the pews must come to the point when you will prove the value of the Saviour to men by the wholeheartedness of your welcome to the stranger in your gates. Otherwise the Church dies!

Yours heartily,

The Dominie.

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May 21.

My Friend:

I am sorry that you missed Dr. Blank's address to the Men's Club. You would have appreciated one point he made. He told of a man who was invited out to a fine dinner at a friend's house. When he sat down at table, and the delicious viands were set before him, he could not eat. "What's the matter?" asked the host sympathetically. "Oh," he replied, "I saw a peanut-stand when I left home, and I bought a nickel's worth and nibbled them. Then I was thirsty, and I stopped at the drugstore for a soda. Then I passed a candy store, and I just bought a little to eat as I came along. And down at your corner yonder I passed a fruit-stand, and I couldn't resist the temptation to buy a couple of apples and eat them. I'm sorry, but my appetite's gone somehow!"

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It is not hard to find the reason for many a person's indifference to his church. He is bored by sermons, put to sleep by anthems, irritated by soul-stirring, awakening religion. He has lost his appetite for these things. He sings with Cowper:

“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his Word?”

Appetite lost? Of course; for he had a jaded palate before ever the church bell rang. He makes a late Saturday night of it often. I have a faint suspicion that his wife is responsible, because I know how tired he is by Saturday; but, that aside, he turns in at midnight or later on Saturday, and he wakes in the morning ready for nothing but a Morris chair and a paper. No one can have an appetite for wholesome Sunday

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food who feeds thus to the point of spiritual dyspepsia of a Saturday night. A Saturday night dance, theatre, card party, is warranted to make his soul lose the zest for substantial food. The big Sunday dinner, the afternoon spent in sleep, cigars and supplements, or in motoring or calling, the overwhelming satiety of such things, is often the reason why he yawns, "I don't feel like church to-night."

Don't feel like it? Who could, under such a course of treatment? No human being could keep his appetite for genuinely religious things after nibbling all the week and eating full on Saturday of cheap magazines, sensational stories, plays, cards, dinners, late hours! God save us from such a life! Let us be sensible and moderate in our pleasures and cut out the things that act on the soul's finest desires like peanuts and candy before dinner.

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I heard one man say after the Men's Club meeting that "Christianity and church-going are not synonymous."

Not synonymous? Certainly not; but, nevertheless, inseparably connected.

There are some who say that they can be "just as religious" whether they come to church or not. (I am talking, not of the "shut-ins," but of those who are able to attend and do not.)

True religion has always been church-going religion. It has always found a genuine refreshment and a deep joy in meeting with the saints in the sanctuary. It has always sung feelingly, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

On the other hand, neglect of the services of the church is a mark of spiritual decline. I have my reasons for so thinking:

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First, Jesus was a persistent and habitual church-goer.

Second, Jesus himself established for the Christian Church that concerted worship which had always been at the heart of the Jewish Church; and Jesus promised to be present wherever the saints, if only two or three, should meet in his name.

Third, there are benefits to be had from church-going which can be had in no other way. (List on request, if you cannot think of them for yourself!)

Fourth, the same holds true of benefits to be rendered. Neighbors to be encouraged, strangers to be served, the larger interests of the Church to be aided—surely these are no small privileges enjoyed by Mr. Church-goer.

Fifth, Mr. Stay-at-home and his family plainly lack in genuine spiritual life and interest. Their Bibles are dust-covered;

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their prayers are perfunctory; their neighbors know them as no more nor less than merely worldly people. There is a direct connection between all this and their absence from the sanctuary.

And then when Mr. S. can be persuaded to betray his real reason for staying away it is always found to be an unchristian reason. He does not like the preaching or the choir or his pew, or he has a grudge against Mr. Church-goer, or he has other interests. Get to the bottom of his heart, and usually he neglects his church because of worldliness, pure and simple.

True religion goes to church unless the Lord has laid it by the heels. It goes because it loves to go, loves to meet God's people, loves to think on high and holy things, loves to hear the gospel, loves to praise God from whom all blessings flow. I have never known a truly gracious, Christian character

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but what its owner loved the house of God. Church-going is an essential part of true religion, always has been, and always will be.

Faithfully yours,
The Dominie.

May 28.

Dear Friend:

The day after to-morrow will be Memorial Day. We shall keep it gladly, out of a deep affection for the memory of those who have given up their lives in the wars of our nation.

We honor them not only because they died for their country, but because, on battlefield, in forced march, in bivouac, they lived for it too.

Living is the common test of patriotism. It is only in emergencies that men must fight. The average citizen is called on to

prove his patriotism by the tests of living in times of peace. This is what Lincoln had in mind at Gettysburg: "It is for us, the living, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced."

There are campaigns being fought out in our day stirring enough to rouse the heroic in the breast of any true patriot.

There is the battle for simplicity of life in the face of appalling snobbery and extravagance. A Joan of Arc is made of no more heroic stuff than the woman who dares to-day to ignore the fashions. No petty campaign, this, but one that calls for a vast army armed with sanity and contentment.

There is the battle for commercial probity. Where there is so much smoke there must be some fire; and where we have so much legislation restricting the methods of business, so many investigations, so many

scandals, it seems probable that modern business methods are not altogether what they should be. The *Wall Street Journal* declares, "It takes greater and finer heroism to dare to be poor in America than to charge an earthwork."

There is, too, the conflict for social purity. There is no country in the world so disgraced by its divorce laws as ours. Here is room for righteous struggle, not merely for better laws, but for a social standard that will dare to use the deadly weapon of ostracism. And in the same field is being fought the battle over the "single standard" of morality. Here is opportunity for a heroic stand on the part of both men and women who believe that purity is the same for both sexes. And here again the keen weapon is ostracism.

The conflict over the saloon calls for soldierly virtues. Lincoln called this the next

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great campaign after the abolition of slavery. No evil in our land is so colossal, so iniquitous, so fatal to all good interests, as this. And the soul that would fight against it must be of heroic mould.

And there is the campaign for the observance of law. Here is a field for heroes! Rich and poor, ignorant and cultured, are alike to be dealt with. Inertia, callousness, self-indulgence, cynicism, political corruption, party politics, all are to be met and vanquished.

God be thanked, there are many, many true patriots in the land, spending themselves like heroes in such conflicts!

And God be thanked, there is beginning to make itself felt abroad over the land a revival of genuine old-time Christian piety, which is, in the last analysis, the one essential ingredient in the making of a patriot. Reverence for law, love of neighbor, hatred

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of evil, indignation at injustice, moral courage, self-forgetfulness—these are Christlike qualities. God give us more.

“For truth and right, and only right and truth—

Right, truth, on the absolute scale of God—

No pettiness of man’s admeasurement;

In such case only, and for such one cause,

Fight your hearts out!”

Cordially,

The Dominie.

June 4.

My Friend:

Have you ever wondered what were the feelings in the breast of the dominie as he watched the people file out after the Communion Service? So many thoughts crowding in upon him! What does this renewal of vows, this closest of associations, mean to

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these dear folk? how deeply do they feel? to what heaven are they exalted? Out they go, murmuring greetings to one another, smiling, chatting; what do they take with them?

What will you take with you? That is to say, what that you did not bring with you when you came?

You ought certainly to know your Saviour better and love Him more. For this is the very picture of the lengths to which his love to you led Him. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

"Thine am I by all ties,
But chiefly thine
[That, through thy sacrifice,
Thou, Lord, art mine."

And you ought to hate all sin more intensely. For at the very heart of this Sup-

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per there lies the fact that our dear Lord died because of our sins. "Him that knew no sin God made to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Gladly He gave himself to death for our sake, "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree." Surely you cannot think of this without feeling keenly that that which needed so great expiation must be a monstrous and hateful thing to God, without being willing to sing with old Isaac Watts:

"Oh, how I hate these lusts of mine
That crucified my Lord;
These sins that pierced and nailed HIS flesh
Fast to the cruel wood!
Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die!"

And you ought to love your fellows in the church more than ever. He who comes hither in the right spirit is sure to find him-

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self, as he leaves, with a greater warmth in his heart towards those with whom he has just feasted. He will surely be less critical of their faults, more considerate of their opinions, more genuinely sympathetic. He will not forget the "shut-ins"; nor will he omit from his prayers henceforth those whom he has just welcomed into this goodly fellowship, and those others who are having a hard fight of it to keep the faith.

"Blest be the tie that binds,
Our hearts in Christian love."

And surely you will henceforth do more for Christ. "Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price; glorify God therefore"—how? By self-interest? by absorption in "bread-and-butter-business?" by just enjoying life? Nay, by ranging yourself at Paul's side, gladly wearing the name "doulos"—"bond-slave" of Jesus Christ,

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and out of grateful love attending to the Master's business.

Heartily yours,
The Dominie.

June 11.

Old Friend:

Sometimes I am tempted to feel that in giving us our Sunday God has come near casting His pearls before swine!

It was early in the seventeenth century that Henry Vaughan wrote his quaint praise of Sunday:

"The pulleys unto headlong man; time's
bower;

The narrow way;

Transplanted paradise; God's walking houre;

The cool o' th' day!

A taste of heav'n on earth; the pledge and cue

Of a full feast! and the out-courts of
glory."

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It may be exaggerated in some of its odd figures of speech, but it expresses a whole-souled delight in Sunday as a day set apart for the best thing in life, namely, fellowship with God; and so I dare to quote it in the twentieth century. The man who wrote it had something that many of us sorely need.

What do you put first on Sunday?

Some people put their stomachs first in importance. Sunday happens to be almost the only day on which many busy men and women can visit friends and kinsfolk; and the good wife whose house is to be thus honored puts on her apron and stays at home from church to superintend arrangements; and at some time after noon the family and their guests sit down to gourmandize. It takes an hour or two to eat the American Sunday Dinner (capitals are justified!) and another two or three hours for men-folk to sleep and walk it off—while women-folk

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work it off a-cleaning up the dishes! What a glorious blessing such a Sunday must be! But *what about God?*

Some people put the newspaper first. Johnny runs down to the store for it while father dresses. Father begins on it before breakfast, and applies himself diligently to it for the small remainder of the morning and through the waking fraction of the heavy-lidded afternoon. Mother takes a look at the women's section and the society news, after the roast is in the oven and again after the dinner dishes are washed. Johnny and his small sister spend the greater part of the day over the fascinating crudities and uglinesses, the funny rudenesses and vulgarities, of the colored supplement. Altogether a blessedly intellectual day! But *what about God?*

Some people put "the play of arms and legs" first. Premising, with unctuous logic,

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that "the Sabbath was made for man," and that "it is their only chance for exercise," they spend a glorious day outdoors, and they go to sleep Sunday night with the fine tingle of physical weariness in their limbs. I confess it sounds pleasant and helpful; but—*what about God?* Are these people cattle—and nothing more?

 "What is he but a brute
 Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want
 play?
 To man propose this test:
 Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone
 way?"

And then I cannot help but doubt that second premise of theirs; for I have observed that the heartiest devotees of the Sunday-for-exercise theory are the people who can most easily get Saturday afternoon off. But

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even if they can't get it—where does God come in?

One might quibble over details of Sunday-keeping forever. It is to be settled by the individual conscience; and the individual conscience has for guide the Word of God plus common-sense. Sunday is a day set apart for the best interests of man; and those best interests cannot be served if God be left out, or left least. We ought to count that Sunday lost which fails to prove itself in very truth “a gleam of glory after six days’ showers.” He who slights his Sabbath opportunity for cultivating his soul’s acquaintance with God is very certain to make of God a stranger during the six days that follow.

Sincerely as always,

The Dominie.

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June 18.

My dear Man:

It does me good to see you sing in church! Your voice is lost in the volume of song (Thank God, our people *sing!*), but "actions speak louder than words." I wish they all enjoyed it as you do. The Christian who does not love the hymns of the Church is an anomaly.

There are no songs like these! And nowhere is the purifying, beautifying, ennobling influence of Christianity more clearly seen than in its effect upon the music of the civilized world and its development of so rich a treasure as we have in our hymn-books. There are no songs like the songs of Zion. The history of our hymns is the history of the sorrows and joys, the persecutions and conquests, the fears and hopes, of the typical Christian and the whole Church.

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Jesus himself began that history when, as Mark tells, before He led his disciples to Gethsemane, He gathered them about Him and they sang a hymn; and the Church has been singing hymns ever since, singing in prisons, in the galleys, in the catacombs, in the torture-chambers, in hermits' cells and vast cathedrals, singing her triumphant way down the centuries.

And the best part of sacred music and song, the most valuable part of it all, is the congregational hymn-singing. We all love to hear beautiful voices in the choir-loft. Such music, sung and heard in a devout spirit, is a fine element of worship. Milton felt its power:

“There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voicèd quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness through mine ear

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Dissolve me into ecstacies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes."

But still there is no melody the Church can raise that compares with the reverent, thoughtful, hearty singing by the whole congregation of one of the great hymns, "The Church's One Foundation" or "Rock of Ages" or "Love Divine" or "Come, Thou Fount." I doubt if all our other Church music put together sounds as sweet in God's ears as this.

I think of preaching soon upon the duty of "making a joyful noise unto the Lord." There is food enough for a sermon in the words; and it will not be hard to fit it to our congregation! We do sing heartily; but there is so much to be gained by directing our singing "unto the Lord" rather than unto other folks' ears! And there are some who seem to feel that because they lack musical talent they are therefore to remain

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silent. I see them every Sunday, ashamed or afraid to sing! Ah, but if they would only make a "joyful noise" and make it for God's hearing, it would do them and all of us so much good! What can God care if a man sing off the key? If it make no melody to human ears, I am sure that, just as the many incongruous noises of the city become harmonious to the ears of the man far above in one of our modern towers, so his song will prove tuneful in the ear of God.

So I shall preach both to the man who can only make a noise and to the man who can sing. Here is a part of our worship in which we can all closely unite. Let us all do our very best to enable the church to worship God fitly and nobly through our congregational singing.

This means reverence, thoughtfulness, heartiness, self-forgetfulness on your part. Let us make the hymns we sing during these

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coming months a full expression of our faith and hope. Do you love Christ? Is your hope in Christ? Then sing out! Do not be afraid of showing your feelings. He who loves our Lord ought to wear his heart on his sleeve in church. When a hymn is announced, sing! Think, and worship, and pour your heart out before God! A singing church is always a healthy church, and certainly it must be a church the dear Lord loves.

I do not know of one of the truly successful churches of our day where the singing of the people is not an essential factor in that success. Take Paul's advice: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God."

Cordially yours,

The Dominie.

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June 25.

Dear Friend:

Last Thursday I had to deal with a young soul that had been mortally hurt—through no fault of its own. The girl is in a safe place now, quiet, guarded; but it is years too late! She had been permitted to grow up on the streets; and we—the community—we had left certain dangerous things lying around the streets, God forgive us! Yesterday a youngster down town picked up a stick of dynamite in the gutter. We might better have left dynamite lying around than have left the things that so grievously hurt my frail girl of Thursday!

There is an old woman in Glasgow whom we should copy in larger matters. She is bent with years and rheumatism. A policeman noticed her peculiar actions one day, and kept his eye on her. She was hobbling

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about, stooping often to pick up something which she hid in her apron. The officer grew suspicious, walked over to her, and asked gruffly what she had in her apron. In it were bits of broken glass—nothing else. “I thought I’d take them out o’ the way o’ the bairnies’ feet,” she said. And the officer walked off, shamefaced. ✓

It seems sometimes, to one who sees something of the life of the children of the town, that something more might be done here to take the hurtful things out o’ the way o’ the bairnies’ feet, and out o’ the way o’ the feet of the almost-grown-up bairns, too.

There is the cigarette habit, for instance. I have never known a time when so many of the younger boys were smoking cigarettes as now. I cannot say just where they are bought, but I am sure they are bought right here in our stores. Evidence is not lacking as to the injury done by the “coffin nail”; the

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boy's school record and his record in general morality are vitally affected. Here is a point at which not spasmodic but constant vigilance on the part of school authorities, police, and parents is needed.

There are the Sunday shops, too. It may not be amiss to recall the words of Justice McLean, of the United States Supreme Court: "Where there is no Christian Sabbath there is no Christian morality; and without this free institutions cannot be long sustained." In certain nearby communities of the same character as ours the soda-fountain, the cigar stand, and the candy counter are closed on Sunday. Here we choose to remain indifferent to a situation that cannot fail of moral injury to all concerned.

So, too, one might point out the need of taking the saloons out of the way o' the bairnies' feet. What of the children in this

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town whose homes are made unworthy the name of home by our saloons; whose lives are stunted and blasted from the start by our saloons; whose right to the care and protection of their parents is nullified by our saloons? And what of the young men who are, before our very eyes, now stepping up to fill the places of the down-and-out and the dead at the bars of our saloons? These things need not be; but they will be until we clear the way for the bairns.

This is your problem as well as mine. Your children are growing up here. Their feet will be cut by the broken glass, their souls hurt, perhaps mortally, by sharper evils. Oh, I wish you men of the church could see what I see! I'd like to see you shrink and whiten at the spectacle of hurt and death wrought by the accepted evils of our town! No one can clean the streets but

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you! In the name of God, clear these things out of the way o' the bairnies' feet!

Yours,

The Dominie.

July 2.

My dear Friend:

À propos of the Fourth, I have just read an amusing story.

During the Franco-Prussian war there lived in Paris a certain eccentric nobleman, Count Bertrand by name. His greatest peculiarity was his habit of annually leaving home, going to some quiet hotel, and there taking to his bed for three full months. He received no callers, and saw not a soul but his servant, who brought him one meal a day, and served that meal in absolute silence. ✓

Bertrand was thus hibernating when

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Paris was besieged. He might never have known of the fierce struggle, the hardships and suffering within the city, if the bread served with his meal had not, one day, been so bad that he could not eat it. He flew into a rage and demanded the reason for such poor service. Whereupon his man, breaking his long silence, told him of the siege and the consequent famine.

The count was stunned. He rose, dressed, and wandered about the hotel, bewildered, muttering over and over, "Paris is besieged! What ought a Bertrand to do?" Suddenly a happy answer struck him: "Why, he ought to go to bed;—and I will go to bed!"

And go to bed he did, and there he stayed until the siege was ended.

The moral? Decidedly there's a moral. I called this an amusing story, but it has another side, far from amusing.

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The man who is interested in public affairs and national dangers only when his own convenience is affected is a very small calibre patriot. He still exists, this Bertrand; but we could do better without him. He is a parasite, eating the bread of the nation, while he declines to shoulder shovel or rifle when the country needs either. America wants men and women who think beyond their own bread and butter, men and women whose own patriotic souls will not let them, once roused, go back to sleep in the hour of need. In a nation growing as ours is growing, ever entering on new and untried phases, ever facing fresh emergencies, every hour is such an hour, calling for patriots whose hearts are big—bigger than their stomachs!

Save us from the man whose indignation is born merely of a sense of personal injury and is so ephemeral at best that he can, with

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Bertrand, sleep through the boom of the
siege-guns!

You who know the soul of the commuter
will agree with me; but there is as much
flimsy, time-serving, calculating, selfish
pseudo-patriotism in other classes as in that
with which you journey daily on the train.
The country needs—and never more than in
this crucial year—the patriotism that is
stung deep by national peril regardless of
whether personal interests be affected or not.
Pray with me, on the Fourth, for more such
true lovers of country.

Yours cordially,
The Dominic.

July 9.

Dear Friend:

Short or long, what a blessing a good va-
cation is! William Motherwell, fleeing

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from his desk in a murky Scottish city,
wrote with delight about his holiday:

“Up, up, my heart! and walk abroad;
Fling carking care aside;
Seek silent hills, or rest yourself
Where peaceful waters glide.
Good Lord, it is a gracious boon
For thought-crazed wight like me ✓
To smell again these summer flowers
Beneath this summer tree.”

But there are conditions essential to making a vacation a thorough success, from which we return better in body, mind and soul.

We ought to go for the right purpose, which is not excitement; that is the last thing most people need when the summer comes. They have had enough excitement to last a while, rush and hurry and sordidness and struggling. Their supreme need is peace and quiet, release from strain, chance

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for the soul to stretch itself, so to speak. What shall it profit a man if he crowd his holiday full of excitement and come back unrested in spirit?

We ought to go to the right place. Jesus set a good example when he asked his disciples to come apart to a "desert place and rest a while." "Desert" means simply "empty of humanity." He wished to get them away from the crowd, from the world's business, to a place apart. Most people go where the crowd goes; and they make a great mistake. Undoubtedly they can rest their bodies at a great resort; but—their souls? I have my doubts. The mind, the soul, want big spaces, silences, beauties of nature.

"The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our
powers:

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Little we see in nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid
boon!"

We ought to go in the right company. Vacation is made largely by the people in whose company it is spent. We crave company of some sort, and we are sure to have it. But of what sort? The ways of summer folk are easy-going. Acquaintances are easily struck up. People decent enough at home allow themselves strange license on a holiday. But one day in bad company may spoil a life; certainly, a day in bad company will make a definite and lasting impress on character.

We ought to take certain baggage along. The home church, for example. Some people forget it. Take it along, in your thoughts planning your share of its work in the fall, and in your prayers asking God's benediction on it, and in your holiday spend-

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ings setting aside the Lord's share. Our Bibles, too, ought to go with us: not at the bottom of the trunk, to be left untouched, but where the Baedeker goes, in pocket or handbag. It is the soul's guide-book, and there is never a better chance to use it, nor a greater need for it, than on vacation. And our own selves ought to go, too. It is very easy to play Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in this matter of vacations. But a Christian has no option. He must be himself always, or else prove that his religion is only a cloak; he must hold to his convictions about the Sabbath, about church-going, about clean conversation, about neighborliness, about personal habits—hold to his convictions always! What troubles conscience at home ought to stir it abroad! And this is hard, because the restraints of home are lacking. Don't put your Christianity in the cedar-chest; take it along!

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A happy, healthy summer to you and yours.

As always,
The Dominie.

July 16.

My Friend:

You write about the "modern Athenians" as you have met them on your vacation. That is a happy phrase. They are legion. They are, as you say, outdoing those of ancient days in their passion for novelty. You and I live in the midst of them! and we cannot help but observe this present-day madness.

When I was a small boy the fashions, if I mistake not, changed once a year. (My mother used to make over her gowns for the second and even the third year!) When I was in college they had doubled that rate.

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To-day, they change quarterly, and the tailor and the modiste appear to be grieved that there are but four seasons a year! The craze for novelty in dress is one of the most conspicuous—and futile—characteristics of our time.

Go to the theater, and you will find the same desire in evidence. There must be an eternal succession of new effects, startling developments, novelties. The most striking illustration of this lies in the fact that the very same people are found in eager attendance on both the most flagrantly immoral plays and those plays that are advertised for their religious qualities. They are there at both plays just because they are, in their bored sort of eagerness, searching for something new in the way of a sensation.

Go to an “up-to-date” restaurant, or country club, or private entertainment, and you will find people, even the younger of the

young people, dancing with steps and attitudes that have an unmentionable origin and unsavory history. They want novelty; that is why they step over the bounds of refinement.

The news-stand is a good indicator of public manners and tastes. The man at the railroad stand in Hoboken tells me what magazines are selling best—"a mile ahead of the rest." What ones? Two magazines grown notorious in the past short year or two for the nastiness of their stories, stories which mark the moral degradation of some of our cleverest authors. Why do they sell? Because the dear public wants a new sensation every day.

And you and I are a part of this public. We dare not forget that. It seems, in its madness, to have hitched its wagon, not to a star, as Emerson urged, but to a frenzied, orbitless meteorite. It is our business not

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to go with the crowd, but to hold fast to simplicity, morality and common-sense, knowing that novelty is not a synonym for worth. Just now the function of Christian people seems to be to act as the brake to society, a big task, and bigger in summer, I think, than at any other time.

Sincerely,

The Dominie.

July 23.

Dear Friend:

Did your good wife tell you what a certain small boy in our neighborhood said in his prayer the other night? "Good-by, God! I'm going to the mountains to-morrow."

So many grown folk might have said it! They go off on a vacation and leave God be-

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hind without even the formality of a good-by. The church is left, with a sigh of relief at the thought that there is no obligation to attend service for weeks or months to come. The Sunday-school is left, under the assumption that the children will be "just as well off without any lessons for the summer." The Bible is forgotten, left in the house behind closed shutters and locked doors. The family altar—well, the family altar tumbled down years ago. The weekly envelope for the support of the church and its work—it too is left behind.

What's the matter? Why, all this is but symptomatic of a grave condition—namely, that these good people propose to go away and leave God himself behind. They will be found breaking Sunday as they never would at home; visiting places they would not go near at home; cultivating habits that they would not dare indulge in at home.

And throughout a whole vacation God is surely forgotten!

The only wrong in all this is that there is no true Christianity in it. Religion that can be packed away in moth-balls is not Christ's religion. Consistency is absolutely essential, since the true Christian recognizes God's presence and his own responsibility on his vacation just as fully and gladly as at home.

Up here in the mountains one may see both kinds of religion to advantage. In a neighboring camp there is a man whose life has made a deep impression on me. His religion is one that, to any observer's eyes, has not changed character in the least by being transplanted many miles from home or by being set down among strange people. People who possess this peculiar sort of religion evidently act in their vacation surroundings on the very same principles that

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guide them at home. Some men, when they put on a flannel outing shirt and an old felt hat, undergo a corresponding change of character and conduct; but these people are the same, in speech and deed, as at home. Some forget the obligations of neighborliness in a summer colony; but these people are constantly quietly proving as good neighbors up in the hills as down in New Jersey or Brooklyn. Their religion is thoroughgoing; it comprehends all their daily life, wherever they happen to be.

That is the only sort of Christianity that is genuine. It is the only sort that men who are not Christians will give weight to. It is the only sort the Church of Christ ought to contain or to cultivate.

If we are looking for a standard to set for this year's work in this church, we can find none better than this—that in every line of the church's activities we try to produce in

Letters From the Dominie

men and women and children just such a religion. The Sunday-school, the Men's Club, the Young People's Society, the preacher—all ought to have in mind the standard set by Christ Jesus, to develop Christians who shall be themselves, practise their principles with a Christlike kindness, abroad as well as at home, Christians with creed plus practice, Christians on vacation and at work, Christians always, in all circumstances, because Christians in heart.

Our vacation goes well. All happy, lazy and getting fat! The trout are taking the fly nicely,—but the biggest one continues, after time-honored fashion, to get off again! My fingers have not yet begun to itch for work, but if they follow the precedent of former summers they will soon.

Yours,

The Dominie.

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July 30.

Dear Old Friend:

Not much chance to write letters up here, but there is plenty of opportunity for doing one's thinking. What a hurry-scurry life we lead at home! At least it seems so from these mountain heights. How "the everlasting hills" do humble a man; and how this clean, crisp air does drive the cobwebs from one's mind! I wish all of us could run away to a glorious height like this every little while, just to be made sane again!

We went over into Maine yesterday for a fine day's trip. Eighteen miles in a ramshackle motor-boat on a weird man-made lake with whole forests thrusting dead branches up through the waters; then a two-mile trail through the spruce; and then the river, white "swift water" here, a long swirling, black pool below. What a river!

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and what trout! My poor little flies were not half big enough. The guides used salmon flies!

Which (the guides, not the flies) bring me to my tale. It is of a guide and his philosophy that I write.

He is short and wiry, brown as an Indian save for white mustache and grizzly eyebrows: quiet as an Indian, too, with clear blue eyes that note everything. They say he knows every inch of the North Woods.

He had me in charge. All the way up the lake and for half a mile on the trail to the river he said never a word. Then he spoke:

"I guess I'd better let one o' these boys lead the way here. These trails are all new to me."

I looked at him in some surprise.

"I hain't guided up this valley," he ex-


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plained, "for ten years; and the dam's hid all the old trails."

He looked up through the scanty timber towards the distant mountains, then turned and smiled at me.

"But they can't fool me," he said simply, "as long as them mountains stands there. I can always find my way by them, if every trail's gone!"

Man, what a fine speech was that! I thought of all the novel changes in thought, of new theological and philosophical systems and theories, of the bewildering maze of new trails offered us modern travellers, with the old trails (so they tell us) wiped off the map, obliterated. But God be thanked, the mountains still stand! Above forest and stream, high o'ertopping swamp and "slashing," there, immovable, unchanging, rise the great fundamental truths of revelation! No matter how confusing the



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trails, we can still follow my old guide and "lift up our eyes to the hills!" Let the little theories and novelties go! Eyes aloft, to the great truths! To guide ourselves by them, unconcerned as the old guide over the petty things that perplex others—this is the way to live! Don't you agree?

Yours,

The Dominie.

August 6.

Dear Old Friend:

Still here in the high hills, and fishing and tramping more zealously every day. I wish you were near enough to permit of my sending you the mate to the "square-tail" trout I ate for breakfast to-day. Better still (while I am wishing), I wish you had been here to catch him. He came out of a deep,

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cool lake three miles up in the mountains, just through the notch which I can see on the northern horizon as I write.

We ended the week's fishing up there yesterday. John, the old guide I wrote about last week, had me in tow again. We came down from the lake in the twilight, after the early evening fishing. On the way he volunteered another bit of his homely philosophy. Passing a big spruce, I saw an axe driven into its side, and no sign of an owner in the neighborhood. John nodded. He had seen it on the way up in the early morning.

"That must belong to the surveyors down below," he said. "They'll be back for it some time."

There hung the axe in the tree, and might have hung there for a month, and not a man would touch it save the owner. Here was the simple honesty of Eden, truly. When I

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said something about it the old fellow shook his head sadly.

"Used to be that way all through the woods," he said, "but 'taint so no longer. Over at the — Lakes, now, ye can't leave a thing around without it'll be taken. They're gettin' too civilized."

I have thought of his words a hundred times since. Civilization, in the general meaning of the phrase, has not always carried blessing with it. Theft and falsehood have gone with the city sportsman and his money to the mountains. Rum and its unmentionable companions have gone with "Western progress" to Africa and the Orient. And here at home? Here too we pay a high price in some ways for our civilization. A few days ago I came up out of the Subway, for whose speed I had paid by breathing its foul air and being deafened by its din. I looked across City Hall Park and

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saw that wonderfully beautiful Woolworth Tower—"frozen music"—piercing the blue with its golden tip; but the side street down which I walked later had been metamorphosed into a sunless abyss by the skyscraper of civilization; and I remembered that gracious homes had once stood there, with gardens sloping to the river . . . And then I thought of the war, with all the agencies of "civilization" at work to help prosecute it . . . !

We call it the march of progress. And we have progressed. The world is better, doubtless, than ever before. But—has this colossal machinery of modern life really helped in the progress? We are too easily impressed by the externals of our civilization. Judging by the one gauge, the making of men, it sometimes seems as if we were not getting full value. There are greater things than power, efficiency, impressive- ✓

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ness. Civilization must be made to produce them or it fails.

We shall be back soon, to get into harness again, and, I hope, pull better than before. Good health and a good time to you all!

Heartily yours,

The Dominie.

August 13.

My Dear Friend:

Last Sunday morning at church-time we strolled down to the one little church, a mile or so below the camp, to find two women waiting, with three small youngsters, in doubt as to whether there would be church that morning or not. The arrival of the sexton (store-keeper, over the way) settled the matter in the negative. The young theologian who supplied the several churches along the valley during the summer months was sick. The sexton was sizing us up

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while he talked. I imagine that the average fisherman up here is not distinguished for his church-going habit; for the man turned to me and asked abruptly, "Either of you a minister?" I confessed. He had some initiative, it appeared, for he informed me at once that he would let folks know that I was going to preach in the evening.

It was a delightful service—to me, at any rate. I wonder if you can appreciate the inspiriting consciousness I had that I was dealing with people who came to church from more than mere force of habit or fashion? I did enjoy it, wheezy organ, nasal voices, smell of smoky lamps—all of it. And after it was over one old fellow came up with tears in his eyes, patted me on the shoulder, and said earnestly, "Well, Elder, that'll carry us a long way. Thank ye. Thank ye."

I do love to be told just that—that my

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preaching will carry people just a wee bit further and more safely on the road. I have the natural man's liking for praise—I'll never fully subdue that while I'm in the flesh, I suppose—but that's not it. More than I like to be told that I've done well I love to be assured that I have helped some one.

And I hate the cynical attitude of so many of our sophisticated people at home. They assume that the preacher is out to make his reputation by his preaching. I hate that. I want a reputation—I say it to you frankly; I want it; but I want it just because it will give me more ears for my Message. (I know you believe me when I write this.) And I want, much more, to have proof that I have faithfully transmitted that Message. I tell you, it felt good to have that old backwoodsman pat me on the back! I wish I had more of it at home.

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I wonder—has it ever occurred to you that praise may be wholesome? Not flattery, but praise, or better, thanks? I think I could preach better and harder, and win more men for my Saviour, if you at home were to “pat me on the back” a little oftener.

This is a confidence with a vengeance! but I shall let it go, with all good wishes.

Yours faithfully,

The Dominie.

August 20.

Dear Friend:

No more of the hills in my letters, for we are down on the coast, with a salt breeze in our nostrils and a flat horizon of sea before us. This huge caravansary is somewhat of a contrast to the camp up near the skies. Such a crowd of people, so busy about their pleasures! An orchestra is play-

Letters From the Dominie

ing out on the veranda—not quite the same as the voice of “the murmuring pines and the hemlocks” (most of which were really spruces in *our* forest primeval).

Much of the life here seems so futile, so enervating, rather than invigorating. I suppose my impression is largely due, however, to the greatness of the contrast with life in the hills. There are fine, heroic deeds done here, as I have just discovered.

It happened a day or so ago. A certain woman (you know her) was dining with friends in one of the cottages near the hotel. The witty hostess laughingly retailed a story of undoubted humor but of just as undoubted shadiness. The little company gathered about the table laughed, at first uncertainly, then, gaining courage from each other, heartily. The woman I speak of laughed with them, but not in the least heartily. The story was followed by another and another;

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a polite little Decameron was being related. But this woman laughed no more. When she said good-night it was with never a single word as to an enjoyable evening, but with chin held high and a decided coolness in her tone.

And when she spoke of it afterwards it was with burning indignation. She had made up her mind, she declared, that she had no desire to have her children ever come to think that their mother could enjoy a dirty story!

God be thanked for such women, women who have a love for clean speech and clean pleasures; women who dread the defilement of their children's minds by anything unclean; women who put their moral principles above the demands of empty politeness.

Too many of us are willing to laugh with the crowd. Too many of us regard social conventions as more important than the

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truth. We need more women—and more men—who will not endure what is unclean or in any way unworthy. Indeed, I think it is harder for us men than for the women to adhere to the clean standard. Women the world has always expected to be decent; but men, for ages past, have been given more “latitude.” In the dominie’s presence most men are clean-mouthed; but I know as well as you do what happens “when the cloth is gone,” and this even with men who are Christians. Oh, for more who will be fired with indignation when vileness is aired in their presence! I thank God many a time for giving me to work with a handful of clean-minded men—you are one—and women like the true “lady” I have just written about. “Blessed are the pure in heart”—and they that company with them!

Sincerely as always,

The Dominie.

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August 27.

My Friend:

We are on our way home at last, having spent a last Sabbath in this great city.

There is one thing you, as a layman, will never know, and that is the deep pleasure the preacher gets out of sitting for a Sunday or two—not much more—in the pew and hearing other men preach. It is one of the treasured delights of my vacation every summer.

On Sabbath morning I heard a great sermon from a noted preacher. I have long wanted to hear him; and he is well worth hearing. He preaches the gospel, and with power.

But the sermon was marred by the atmosphere of the church. I did not feel the close, oil-smelling air of our little church in the mountains half as much as I did the

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heavy, gloomy solemnity of this beautiful church. Somehow there seemed to be a straining after a deeply religious effect. Windows, high pulpit, order of service, the very back of the sexton, the very expression on the faces of the ushers, all seemed to be a bit—a bit overdone. On the way home I thought of what had happened at the Spring meeting of a certain Presbytery.

The unfortunate victim of the stereotyped annual “narrative” was making his report, doing a good best to make dead figures live, when he mentioned a certain church.

He said it had reported its condition as “devotional.”

Then he proceeded to show what had happened during the year in this “devotional” church. It had received no additions to its membership; it had not increased its gifts to benevolences; it had no unusual development along spiritual lines to an-

Letters From the Dominic

nounce; but—it was intensely “devotional.”

Funny, is it? Hardly so. I thought it was, at first hearing; but it has stuck to my mind ever since and I have had time to think about it; and I have a strong suspicion that this particular church is afflicted with a disease that is none too rare. It is a form of delusion. The patient appears to be exceedingly religious; loves the dim religious light in which one can hardly see to read a hymn; delights in the vague, sensuous, mystical hymns that mean little or less; enjoys a sermon composed of sweetness and light, without the seasoning of strong doctrine; is pleased to sing fervently of the blood of Jesus, yet is shocked by the plain statement of the atonement; prizes a stained glass window above the contrite heart of a sinner; shudders at the crude, rude methods of a Billy Sunday; worships before the images of Liberalism, Toleration and Social

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Service; and is, withal, deeply "devotional."

"It is not thus that souls are won," not thus the Kingdom is enlarged, not thus the Lord Christ glorified. A church that cannot show at the end of the year a gain of a dollar in gifts or a person in membership is, if a "devotional" church, rendering its devotions before some other than Jesus Christ. Devotion to Him brings results; and the more complete the devotedness, the larger the results. There is a vast difference between the devotion that feels religious because it sits in a comfortable pew and enjoys a pleasant service, and the devotion that is religious, surrendering life itself to the Lord Jesus.

Yours,

The Dominie.

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September 3.

Dear old Friend:

Home again! The town is deserted; the trains are packed; the automobiles skurrying through, seaward or hillward bound, are legion. For us who stay, the weather is hot and close. I am glad you can be away over Labor Day. You will need the rest, for I mean to set you to work as soon as I can get my hands upon you!

I like Labor Day, for I like an excuse for preaching on Work. I have been reading that half-cynical, wholly-wise first part of Ecclesiastes:

“What profit hath man of all his labor wherein he laboreth?”

Isn't that a fine text for Labor Sunday? I have so often, seeing these white-faced men and women plodding home from office and shop, asked myself the same question.

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Why do they live thus? What is this urgent task for? What is the use of it all?

Some, I know, are at work to keep alive. God pity them! Clerks, laborers, women and children in the sweatshops, how many, many there are! Think of it: it is a hundred years since Tom Hood wrote "The Song of the Shirt," but the conditions, the victims, are here still.

"Work—work—work,
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work,
Till the eyes are heavy and dim"—

and on, on without rest, all to keep soul and body together. What terrible pathos there is in work done for this mere motive! What profit have the workers?

Some work to grow, in pocket, in body, in mind. They seek more than bread and butter; they seek personal profit. And this, I think, is sadder still. Some of the men you

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are thrown with are doing just this, working to get what they can out of it. And what do they get? One died last week: his property goes to another, after all these years of straining effort! One lives in his library, stuffing his selfish skin with literary *hors d'œuvres*—to whose profit? I knew a fellow at college who was to be found in the “gym” every day at work on the “muscle machines”; he gained a marvellous set of muscles; but he never played at anything and never made a team! What profit out of all his labor? “He that saveth his life shall lose it!”

There are those, too, who toil for humanity's sake, God bless them! Far be it from me to discount any genuine “social service.” As latterly used the phrase nauseates me; but I know plenty of people (there are more to-day than this old world ever saw before!) who are true, unselfish social servants. It

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is at this point that work begins to bring in profit. Not financial nor tangible, but mighty real, a profit in the joy of life, the consciousness of truest usefulness. He who loves neighbor as self will make his work bring in permanent profit.

But it is those who stop here, in their motive for work, who have put a stigma upon the phrase "social service." The ultimate profit comes after all to the man, the woman, who is consciously, heartily, serving God in his work. "Daughter, thou sweep-est well My floor." You remember it? To wield pen or shovel, needle or mop, to the glory of God; to feel assured of playing a part in the fulfilment of God's great Plan, is to win from work an immeasurable profit in the consciousness of fitness, usefulness, and in the deepest peace of mind and heart. These profits are permanent, eternal income, for the laborer works on, under divine su-

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pervision, eternally. "His servants shall serve Him." What a blessed epitome of the life of heaven and of its rewards!

There are so many little folk doing little things, fit (in this world) only for little things! I wish they could all be made to feel how truly God must value them and their labor. Not the matter nor the method, but the motive—this is the vital point that settles what return shall come from work.

"Our tongues were fashioned for Thy word,
Our hands to do Thy will divine;
Our bodies are Thy temples, Lord;
The mind's immortal powers are Thine;

"Its highest thought, to trace Thy skill;
Its purest love, on Thee to rest;
Its noblest action of the will,
To choose Thy service and be blest."

Sincerely your friend,
The Dominie.

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September 10.

My Friend:

Do not think that when I urged you to "get things going" I failed to appreciate how hard it is to get up steam in the autumn.

One day this summer I missed my train and had to spend some hours at a lumber town away up in the mountains. With a packet of nuts for luncheon, I spent the noon-hour in a great silent mill whose business was the cutting and shipping of pulp-wood for the making of your daily newspaper. One o'clock came. A whistle blew. Men appeared from every direction, popping up stairways and chutes, rising from their hidden seats on log piles. Another whistle; the clanking and grinding of chains and gears, the whirring of knives; and in less than one minute from the second whistle every man was at work in his place!

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Our summer—the church's unwillingly taken noon-hour—is over. The whistle blows. The machinery of our societies and clubs begins to move. Great things are to be done, can be done, will be done, if we, feeling our personal responsibility, are all “on the job” from the sound of the whistle.

There are advantages to be gained by the individual and the church that can quickly get into the routine of things. Yes—you need not smile—I am always urging our people to do more than the customary thing; but, after all, a certain routine is profitable.

One day, not long ago, we were motoring on a poor, a painfully poor mountain road. It had been raining persistently. The black dirt roadway was soft and greasy all the way, and where an occasional spring was determined to cross the road the deep ruts were deeper still. The man at the wheel tried for a while to keep out of those smooth

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hollows. He ran along this side, but the car skidded off toward the ditch. He crossed and tried the other side, but the opposite ditch had equal fascination for the heavy car. At last he dropped back into the ruts, leaned back and heaved a deep sigh, and remarked, "I guess I'll let her travel in the rut. It's a good deal safer on a road like this."

We have all of us valid objections to "falling into a rut"—valid when the "rut" means an improgressive indifference. God keep this church out of such ruts!

But there is a very definite sense in which it will be a good thing for us and for the church if we can quickly and easily drop back, after the summer's rest and change, into the routine of our church activities. It is safer ordinarily to stick to routine than to try other methods. It is far more profitable after a holiday to make oneself get into

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the accustomed swing of things at once than to hesitate and fidget and groan over the compulsion of work.

Here we are at the opening of our autumn work. Before October has fairly started every activity of this church ought to be in full swing. That means that you will at once pick up the accustomed tools and, without grumbling or complaint, start in. Let us waste little time over preliminaries. Most of the planning is done; the rest can be done quickly. I know the reluctance with which busy people—many of them too busy—start in with the church work in the fall. It is largely, I think, because they have not had a full rest. But I know, too, that all of us will be the happier, and the church will be the more prosperous, if we all combine to swing at once into the routine of things. On a rough road the car in the rut will often make greatest speed, and will

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in all probability ride the more easily.

This must, with God's help, be the best year by far the church has known. As the master wrote in crayon across the drawing of his sleeping pupil, "Amplius!"—"Larger, broader!"—so let us, looking back on the past year, write across its record the same word: "Amplius!" Bigger things, better things, this year for us all. The work waits—for you! Begin it aright!

I have mixed my metaphors, perhaps, but I trust my meaning is plain. Do your part in starting things. Cordially,

The Dominie.

September 17.

My Dear Man:

I hope you won't be hurt—I do not greatly mind, in fact I shall be pleased, if I shock you—by my saying that your excuses

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will not hold water. I want to shock you, shock you out of the too large class of non-workers in the church.

Oh, yes, I know you are a trustee, and I do know that you are genuinely interested; but you are not lifting a finger in any specifically religious service. Tell me one thing you have done, one word you have said, along this line in the past year. Am I right?

Then I am going to make a request of you. It is simply this: Consider Peter.

There is no record of any delay or demur on Peter's part on that momentous day when Jesus called him from his boat and his nets, saying, "Follow Me, and I will make you a fisher of men." This was not a call to mere allegiance: Peter had already obeyed that call. This was a call to service, to actual work in Jesus' Kingdom; and Peter did not hesitate.

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I can imagine quite easily that many people, members of Jesus' Church, would stammer and stutter and at last come out with some excuse; and they would utter it, at least in some cases, in all sincerity, thinking it a good one. I can almost hear them:

"I haven't the right temperament." Neither had Peter! But by the grace of God, Peter, through years of patient service, developed it. Jesus called Peter to active service in spite of his many faults of character.

"I haven't a good enough appearance." Neither had Peter! A fisherman, and a Galilean, of all things! God has a way of choosing and using "the base things of the world, and the things that are despised." Jesus called Peter, in spite of appearances, to active service.

"I haven't the education, the polish." Neither had Peter! I have known hun-

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dreds of workers in the Church and Sunday-school, and I have watched the results of their work; and I am frank to say that "grace" in a worker counts for a thousand times more than "polish." Jesus called Peter to active service in spite of his lack of polish.

"I haven't the social position." Neither had Peter! You do not need it. If you happen to have it, it is a fine asset for a Christian at work; but if you have it not, remember that most of the work of the Church has in all ages been done by the rank and file. "Not many mighty, not many noble." Aye, Peter was called in spite of lack of social position.

"I haven't the specialized training necessary." Neither had Peter! You do not need it! We have a very silly idea in our heads to-day about "specialists"—silly, certainly, so far as most of the affairs of the

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Church are concerned. Practically all of the most efficient workers in Christ's Church have been no specialists, but simple, humble, praying, Bible-loving, soul-desiring Christians. Peter was called to active service in spite of utter lack of special equipment.

There is work to be done for Jesus here in this church. It calls for workers. You need not worry, my friend, over any unfitness on your part; follow Jesus into service, and He will make you fit.

Yours,
The Dominie.

September 24.

My Friend:

I wish I could work a wonder in this day. Do you know what it would be? It would be to transform a certain prayer-

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meeting pessimist into an all-around optimist. Why is it that some folks cannot even talk with God in a cheerful, hopeful tone of voice?

Of course, the pessimist, like the poor, is always with us; but he is not nearly so good company as the other ubiquitous person, especially in prayer-meeting! I meet him in many places. So do you.

He talks politics, and we feel as if the country were going to ruin; business, and we are sure the bottom has dropped out of the industrial world; household matters, and we are convinced that every grocer and butcher is a thief; or religion, and we feel that the Church is going fast to decay and that God is in desperate straits!

The worst thing about this doleful spirit is its contagiousness. Put the pessimist in a workshop, and shortly all the men are dissatisfied; he has spread the contagion. Put

him in the church, and in no great time, although things have been moving smoothly, there begins to be a general spirit of unrest, of dissatisfaction. Half of those who are dissatisfied do not know why—it is simply because the pessimist has been around! Pessimism is not comfortable unless it is making every one else uncomfortable. Its voice, iterating and reiterating, gives by mere force of repetition a fictitious value to its statements.

But surely if the pessimistic spirit is out of place anywhere, it is in the Church of the living God. For no one need expect flawless perfection in the Church on earth until Christ comes again. There is here no perfect music, nor perfect sermon, nor perfect ventilation, nor perfect society, nor even a single perfect Christian! It is the glory of the Church that, with all its faults, it is chosen and used by its Lord as the divinely

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appointed tool for His hand. And the ultimate triumph of the Church is sure:

“Gates of hell can never
’Gainst that Church prevail.
We have Christ’s own promise,
And that cannot fail.”

This is true. But it is also true that the spirit of disquiet, of discontent, of pessimism can greatly hamper the progress of the individual congregation. It ought to be easy to choose between the force which confuses and delays and that which encourages and advances the cause of Christ. Better a trowel of mortar than a dynamite bomb. Let us cultivate a cheery, consistent optimism all through this church! There are so many fine things to be said of it! It has not for years been in such good condition, financially, numerically, spiritually. Undoubtedly it has its weaknesses, and we

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would be extremely foolish to blind our eyes to them; but we can best remedy them, not by harping on them forever, but rather by quietly, heartily, persistently filling each his place in the church's activities. One is surer to be an optimist in the church if he finds something to do in it.

And we ought not to forget that optimism, as well as pessimism, is contagious. Spread it! Be a "promoter" of the right sort, an enthusiast for your church. It is Christ's church; and the optimist can serve Him in it far better than the pessimist can.

I have been reading Isaiah the Optimist. What an inspiring challenge he issues to Israel on Jehovah's behalf: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not: lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt spread abroad on the right hand and on the left." To a nation (and a

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Church) fearing reverses and planning "retrenchment" came this stirring advice: Plan for larger things, not smaller! Build your tent bigger; make its curtains longer; splice a length to your tent-cords; drive stouter tent-pegs; for you are going to grow!

With all my heart I believe that at the beginning of this new church year we should make this verse from Isaiah our watchword. For many years this church has been living under the same tent, without being obliged to lengthen her cords or strengthen her stakes. Membership has been about the same, growing a little, but not growing in proportion to the growth of the town. Spiritual power has grown perhaps at no faster rate. The old tent is still more than big enough—unless it be on the side where the Sunday-school lodges.

Now it is time that we expected to grow.

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We have been looking forward to an autumn and winter very much like last year. Let us look forward henceforth to a very different one. Let us plan for larger things, finer things. Let us, like Carey, "Expect great things from God." We have not had faith enough in the past. We have assumed that God could not soften a heart or convert a sinner in this church. We have thought it folly to plan for enlargement. But that is wrong. We ought to be expecting God to fill a larger tent; and we ought to plan accordingly. The churches that grow have planned for growth.

Cordially,
The Dominie.

October 1.

My Friend:

One of the strange facts about our mod-

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ern religious life is the common assumption "that he is an ill-balanced man who shows any emotion in religious concerns." If you should catch your neighbor in church with tell-tale tears upon his cheeks, you would in all probability put him down as a man of more feeling than sense. If you are asked to sing a hymn phrased in a more jubilant, exalted tone than the more sober "devotional" hymns you are used to, you are irritated. And if the man in the pulpit tries, apparently, to stir up your feelings, you feel indignant.

Why? You inject emotion into everything else in the world. Why should not the woman who goes into raptures over a successfully baked cake put a little feeling into her religion? Or the man who yells himself hoarse on the bleachers, why should he not show feeling when he views the grace of God in Christ? You throw in feeling

generously in business, pleasure, politics; why not in religion?

And do not forget that nothing in your life goes so deep into your soul as does Christian experience. The consciousness of pardon, the new sense of peace, the intensity of spiritual conflict, the contemplation of the manifold grace of God in Christ—oh, there is matter here, my friend, to make you forget your conventions and to rock the very foundations of your being with feeling. If there is one person who proves himself sane by the evidence of emotion, it is the true Christian. If there is one place where emotion is in place, it is the House of God. I wish that more of our people might be moved so that they could not hide their feelings.

The late General Booth, that wonderful organizer of the Salvation Army, was asked why he and his Army directed their appeal

so strongly to the emotions. He answered promptly: "Because that is the greatest factor in human life."

He was right, plainly right. Look about you and see. What moves men? Cold truth? No; truth warmed by burning emotion. Will any stump speaker in the backwoods or in a city district be content to try to win men to his political faith by the mere statement of hard facts? He gives them the facts, if he has them; but he gives them the impassioned appeal of his oratory, whether he has the facts or not. Does the lawyer in the courts disdain the opportunity to grip the hearts of the jurors? He knows well that eleven of the twelve will be led by their hearts more than by their heads.

Or take another point of view. Does your banker, engineer, clerk, grocer, blacksmith, make a success of his business when he declines to be stirred to any enthusiasm?

Does your general or your army win without being swept along by cyclonic emotion? Was ever anything worth doing accomplished without the doer having put his heart into it? Was ever any great truth driven home to a man's mind without his being thrown almost off his feet by the emotion stirred up by its impact?

And yet we expect to become robust, energetic, purposeful, successful Christians while we decline to permit of the stirring of our emotions! We expect to win the world to Christ without stirring our own hearts or the hearts of those we would win!

It is arrant nonsense, this conception of cold-blooded Christianity. Did Moody preach in cold blood, or his converts accept Christ in cold blood? Was it so with Spurgeon, Wesley, Whitefield, Savonarola, Paul? Did Jesus preach in cold blood? Did His hearers accept His gospel thus? or

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was He afire? Did not His converts some of them weep, and bathe His feet with their tears, and some go leaping and shouting for joy? Cold-blooded Christianity is dead; it never did anything, and never will do anything, worth doing. What we need is the very thing we are afraid of, to be disturbed, fired, upset; to let our feelings be stirred, our tears loosed, our desires awakened—it may be our hearts broken—for Christ!

Cordially,

The Dominie.

October 8.

My Friend:

I have been rearranging the books on the shelves of my study. Our good old-fashioned housecleaning makes this necessary every spring and fall; but I do not object in the least. I like to have a good excuse for

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putting in a day handling my books. It is like running in on old friends whom one has not been able to see for months, for I have little time to read except with definite aim toward a sermon. And, too, it enables one to make new acquaintances; for there are always books on one's own shelves that are, even after years, total strangers.

Yesterday, browsing thus while I sorted, I ran across a "Book of Anecdotes," the gift of a friend who was tenderly disposing of the library her husband, a minister, had left; and in the hodge-podge of it my eyes lighted upon an old friend. It was the story of that naval captain who, calling for volunteers for a forlorn hope, thought his men all cowards, thinking none had stepped forward when, while his eyes were lowered, every man had done so. When I was a youngster I loved that stirring tale; now I find it even more stirring.

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I wonder, my friend, what would happen if I asked my people to show their loyalty to Christ Jesus by rising or just raising their hands? Yet why not? I am convinced that it would do us all good if we were compelled to give visible sign of our allegiance and willingness. The "good confession" of Jesus before Pontius Pilate was Paul's encouragement to Timothy to be steadfast in his open allegiance to Jesus. It should be to us as well an argument for a frank and manly confession of the faith that is in us.

Why should the people of the Church of Christ hesitate for a moment when they are asked to show their devotion to their Lord by standing up or by raising their hands? Why should they be ashamed to let the world focus its eyes on their confession of Christ?

You say it is unusual? Granted. What

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of it? And is there any reason why it should not be usual?

You call it sensational? In a way, yes; but what valid objection is there to such sensationalism if it assists in deepening the gospel's impression on the mind of a single man, or if it assists a single soul to make decision to surrender to Jesus?

If you personally object to such an act, or shrink from it, let me put to you a plain question: Since you do not care to show in such a way that you stand with Jesus Christ, in what way are you showing it? By attendance at church on Sunday morning? Not in the least; for all the world and his wife goes to church on Sunday morning; that has no great weight as a confession of Christ. Well, by your gifts to the church? Not in the least; for your giving is between you and the church treasurer and God, a private concern. Well, by partaking of the

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Lord's Supper? It is true that in so doing you "do proclaim the Lord's death till he come," but is it a very open proclamation? Is it not rather a quiet, somewhat secluded act, not seen by many of those who should see and hear our confession? Well, by your daily life, then, you confess Christ? To make this true it must be that your life is different from and strikingly better than the life of your worldly neighbor. Is it so? Then, if it is, you are "witnessing a good confession."

But there is a confession to be witnessed not only through the character of your daily life, but through open, clean-cut words and acts specifically intended as confession of Christ. Do you in any word or deed ever, for the sake of drawing others to Christ, proclaim yourself a Christian? If you do serve Christ, why should you refuse to spring to your feet for his sake? It is time

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for us to risk criticism, laughter, whatever comes, if by any means we may help to turn the scale in men's minds towards Christ. Our own cowardice keeps many from Him. ✓

“Ashamed of Jesus? Sooner far
Let evening blush to own a star.

• • • • •
No; when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His Name.”

Faithfully yours,
The Dominie.

October 15.

My Friend:

Much as I would like to run away with you for an afternoon, I cannot do it now. I am “going the rounds.” I like to call at every home in my parish early in the fall, to get in touch again as quickly as possible. It is so hard for the dominie, in such a place

Letters From the Dominic

as this, to get more than a cordial speaking acquaintance with his people!

If you took a census of the ministers, you would probably find that all of them considered "pastoral calling" at once the pleasantest and the hardest of their duties. ✓

There are in every parish, God be thanked, certain homes where the minister feels it the keenest pleasure and the greatest privilege to be allowed to enter. When he leaves, it is with a thanksgiving psalm in his heart for such oases in the social wilderness.

The curious thing about these homes is that they are of all sorts. Some are rich, some poor. In some sickness is rarely known; in others it is a permanent guest. In some there resides a continuous prosperity; in others pain and shame and anguish are frequent visitors. And yet all produce the same blessed effect on the pastor when he steps over the threshold.

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It is not because they give him a more effusive welcome than he receives in other homes; for he is almost invariably kindly received. In twelve years I have had discourtesy shown me at only one door—and then it appeared that I had threatened intrusion on a card party!

It is not the kindly reception that makes some calls peculiarly pleasant. It is, I think, simply this: that in these homes religion is an accepted element of daily life, entering into all the home problems, the background, and the foundation, too, of everything. Enter a conservatory, and even blindfolded you will know where you are; just so the sweetness of a Christian atmosphere cannot be concealed from him who enters the home. These people who live here are not afraid of religion! They do not feel uneasy (and make the minister feel as they do) because they are afraid their vis-

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itor will "talk religion." They live on religion; it is meat and drink to them; it is breath to their lungs; it is a reality and a necessity. And the minister feels it.

It is the home where religion is a mere matter of form, where the emphasis is laid on matters wholly worldly, that perplexes the minister. He is heartily welcomed; every one is friendly; but every main line to vital affairs of the soul is deftly turned into a sidetrack. He leaves the house feeling that he has failed of his errand, because these hosts of his, too obviously afraid of "religion," have declined to let the conversation possess any real value.

It is true that the minister will often talk religion. He thinks it the finest and most necessary subject of conversation to be found in all the fields of thought. How silly to talk, like the Walrus and the Carpenter,

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“Of ships, and seas, and sealing wax,
And cabbages and kings,”

leaving the affairs of our souls untouched! Yet many people—Christians too—will twist and squirm (conversationally) to avoid any approach to religion. They will let the dominie into the reception room of their life, but never into the living room!

That is one reason—I grow personal—why I like to cross your threshold. You are all ultra-moderns, but still you are not afraid to talk of the things most worth while.

Sincerely, as always,

The Dominie.

October 22.

Dear Friend:

I saw you smile to yourself last Sunday when I urged people to come to prayer-meeting. I suppose you thought it a use-

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less invitation; you may feel, as many do, that prayer-meeting is out of date, an anachronism in this busy modern age.

I grow weary of hearing about "modern conditions." In every generation since the world began conditions have been "modern conditions." Every age has, in its turn, been "this modern age." But humanity's basic needs have not been observed to change, so far. I am convinced that as long as the Church shall last, so long will Christ's people need the prayer-meeting.

No, sir; no apologies offered for this blessed institution! It needs none. It has a place of its own to fill, and a very important place at that. Some people think it is a secondary consideration, a suitable toy with which to satisfy the desires of a few old-timers, a few ultra-pious people.

On the contrary, I venture the assertion

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that one who comes in the proper spirit will probably get more benefit from the prayer-meeting than from a regular church service. This just because of its informality. It is easy—and often unprofitable, barren—to worship God in formal fashion; but an informal service brings the fact of worship nearer home, and makes prayer less a part of a program than a cry of need or a psalm of thanksgiving.

And is it this very informality that makes you uncomfortable? Afraid you may be called on to read a Scripture verse when you can't find the place? Uneasy when some one rises to speak out of his heart's depths? A wee bit ashamed of the intimacy of it all? Precisely so. Don't you see that this is in itself a tacit confession that your religion is itself largely formal, and that you need the very spirit of intimate fellowship with fellow-Christians and

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closer communion with God which are manifest in the prayer-meeting?

And then, is a Christian only to get, and never to give? Beyond any doubt you have had experiences and you have thoughts, and you can, at will, have power in prayer, all of which your neighbors in the church need.

I am tired of having Christian people speak and act slightly toward the prayer-meeting. It has the promise of Christ to give it a value which should bring all of our people to it: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." If you know anything that we as a church need as much as we need the presence of our Lord, you ought to tell us of it. If you don't, you ought to do all in your power to secure that presence. The prayer-meeting is one of your opportunities.

Cordially yours,

The Dominie.

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October 29.

Dear Friend:

It is easy to distinguish faces from the pulpit. A minister soon gets into the habit of looking over the congregation during the opening service, not to see who is on hand, but to find out who is missing.

There are certain members of this congregation for whom I have long looked in vain; some of them belong to your household. They are as much members of the church as any one of you; they are in more need of the church than most of you; and they are absent through no fault of their own.

Can you guess who they are? The children of some of our homes.

But of course there are good reasons why they are not here? I do not think so. There are excuses given by those responsible

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for their absence; but there is no good reason, so far as I know.

Why aren't they here? Parents, take the stand!

"Because they get tired."

Nonsense! These children are not neurotics. You take them to a three-hour pandemonium at the Hippodrome—ininitely worse for little nerves! The trouble is that you are unwilling to take the trouble to train them to sit quietly, one of the finest lessons they could ever learn.

"But I had too much church when I was a child."

It is quite possible that church was dull, or that you were not taught what it meant, which would result in the same dulness for you. But if you had once had too much medicine, or had it given in a wrong way, would you never give your child medicine?

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“But my children are restless, and would disturb other people.”

Possibly. But restlessness is not decreased by absence from church, nor—in the case of ninety-nine out of one hundred children—increased by attendance. And on the other hand, it will not matter at all if a few people are disturbed; they can endure it, and they ought to, for the sake of the children.

“But the children don’t want to come.”

This, too, is quite possible. But it has nothing to do with the case. Children are not to be expected to know what is best for them, even children of High School age (I write it with fear and trembling!). And then, have you done anything to make your children understand what the church is? what it means? what dear Presence is there?

“But the children won’t understand anything of the service or the sermon.”

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Pardon me; they will understand far more than you imagine. "The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts." A child's mind is fully as sensible to religious truth, and his heart to religious impressions, as to anything else that comes before him. In all his life you will never have as good an opportunity to train the best side of his nature as you have now.

Why should the children come to church? To get the habit of coming, a habit more easily formed now than ever in later years; to gain familiarity with the forms of worship, and a knowledge of the great and noble hymns of the church; to become used to associating with Christian people, the best element of society, and their proper element; and to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

If you had family prayers daily; if the

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open Bible were an accepted fact in your home; if a fine, cheerful, genuinely religious atmosphere were the air your children breathed at home; if you took pains to teach them the great truths of your Faith, then they wouldn't need church-going! So? My friend, as long as the Church founded by Christ exists, as long as it is easier to turn God-ward in childhood than when all one's habits are formed, just so long will it be a shameful robbery of the children to keep them away from their Father's House.

There is another side to this grave question.

One day, before I had reached my 'teens, I received orders from headquarters to spend part of my Saturday looking over the potatoes down cellar. The bin was in a dark corner; there were enough potatoes in it to make any boy's back ache; but there was one thing about those potatoes that

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made one forget his back. Most of them had sprouted, and their slender, greenish-white arms were stretching out towards the light—all of them, mind you, towards the light—bending over in the direction of the narrow window across the cellar. And some had sent out longer arms than others; two feet, four, five, six—eight feet long they ran across the cellar floor to reach the light; and if they had been left to themselves for another month, they would have been found trying to climb the wall under the window, still striving to come to the light.

It is no far cry to a place where children are found pathetically groping after the light. Too many homes will do for the spiritual counterpart of the dark potato cellar. The child enters the home with a God-given appetite for the truth. He is a question mark incarnate, a rightly inquisitive soul reaching out for the truth about his

ever-expanding universe. And his loving parents at once put this tender soul in the potato cellar. They are irritated by his questions, nagged by his never-ending curiosity; and they shut him up, literally and figuratively both. "Children should be seen and not heard," is dinned into him until he begins to feel that it is a breach of good manners, not to say a sin, for a child to ask a question. He would like to know about everything he sees and hears—how things grow; who made them; whether babies come from heaven; where God is; why we can't see God; what makes some men stagger when they come home at night; etc., *ad lib.*; but he has no chance to know, for father and mother have put him in the farthest corner of the soul-cellar, and only the least bit of light, murky and vague, can reach him.

This is the exceptional home? God for-

give us, it is more nearly the average Christian home. How many Christian parents take time, thought and pains to let the light of the great truths of life in on the soul of a child? How many actually introduce their children to the friendship of their living, present Saviour? How many do not leave the most delicate questions of physical and spiritual life to the secret whispered conferences of playground and back alley? How many actually enlighten the souls of their children? Not very many. Some are utterly selfish; it is too much trouble to explain things. Some are unable, and are unwilling to confess it. Some deceive themselves with the thought that it is the Church's business. Some dodge responsibility because the children's queries bring out the parents' own inconsistencies of living. Few lead their children to the light. But the child differs from the potato.

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His outreachings towards the light grow feebler, and soon, to all practical purposes, cease. Having little light, he becomes for life a creature of darkness. His parents find, when he is in his 'teens, that he does not like church and religion. Why should he? His soul is not used to the light. They find that he has somehow obtained false standards or developed alarming habits. Why not? And he grows to manhood with his soul in the dark—and content to stay in the dark, which is the worst of it! What else could be expected?

The cellar of ignorance and false ideals is no place for the aspiring soul of a child. "Whosoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe on Me to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea."

Yours,

The Dominie.

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November 5.

Old Friend:

I suspected that you would not agree with all of my sermon on Sabbath-keeping.—a suspicion of narrowness about me, *nicht wahr?*

I wonder if you realize two things: the extent to which our Christian Sabbath has been broken down, and the power the Sabbath has been as an institution in history? Before you call me narrow, look up these points; then we'll get together for a "con-fab" over the matter.

It will not be hard for you to discover conditions in our community—open shops and stores, amusements going full blast, the whole atmosphere a holiday one. But there is one condition I fear you may not observe:

Sunday is a wide-open day in the homes

of some of our Christian people. There are many homes in this town, where father, mother and children are members of the Church, where the Lord's day is no more than a common holiday. A visitor in the house would have difficulty in detecting one single act or event, outside of the morning excursion to Sunday-school and church, which would be valid evidence of the presence there of any religious atmosphere or influence.

There is one habit in particular which seems to me to be absolutely and altogether wrong and pernicious. It is the habit the boys and girls have of doing Monday's lessons on Sunday. It is the usual thing in many homes where a more Christian behavior might be expected. Books are brought home on Friday and put away until Sunday afternoon or evening, when they are brought out, and the one day of the week

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which God gave as a way of escape and rest from secular things ends up with algebra and commercial geography.

What a fine way of aiding in the digestion of the Bread of Life gotten at church and Sunday-school! What a fine sort of endeavor, to go from a Christian Endeavor meeting to this! What a glorious preparation these youngsters are being given for getting profit out of their Sundays in later years! What a fine opportunity Christ will have of using their time when they are allowed to steal His time now!

What are we to expect of our young people ten or twenty years from now, when they are in the prime of life? Why should you, who close your office over Sunday, let your son keep his open? And when that son happens to be a Church member (like you), doesn't it seem worth while to let him feel that Sunday is too good for

some things? You'd have to reform your own Sunday? Well?

Just there's the rub. The trouble is with the general attitude of our Christian parents: that they do not sense the vital poison in the atmosphere of compromise.

As to another point, conditions in our community life, the source of the trouble is identically the same. The authorities are under constant temptation to cater to the lawless and irreverent element. But why?

Gladstone said it was "the duty of the government to make it easy for the people to do right and difficult for the people to do wrong." That appeals to us all as sound doctrine. But it cannot be realized until our Christian citizens make their will felt for the right, which they will do when they themselves cease to hold civil and divine law in contempt. For while responsibility

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for our lax Sunday lies largely with the municipal authorities, it lies largely, too, with the members of the Church in the community.

While it is obvious that the authorities should not cater to such public opinion as demands laxity in law enforcement, it is even more obvious that public opinion of that unworthy sort is fostered by the lax example of many of our Church members. The professed Christian who gets his Sunday morning shave, trots down town for his Sunday cigar, treats his children to Sunday-purchased soda or candy, is giving his open approval to habitual lawlessness and is himself a law-breaker. No amount of varnish will hide the ugly fact.

There are a few facts to be soberly pondered in this connection:

1. Even if stores and shops are open on Sunday with the consent of the public, that

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fact, while it puts an additional responsibility on the store-keeper and the official, does not lessen the responsibility of the customer in the least degree.

2. Even if other people, in crowds, patronize Sunday shops and stores, that fact does not take away a jot of your culpability if you do so. Being one of a crowd does not make you less of an individual.

3. The apparent littleness of the offence does not make it inoffensive. The purchase of a nickel's worth of candy on Sunday seems a petty affair; but it is a big affair in reality, being the proof of your attitude of mind and heart. The only place to draw the line is on the near side of lawlessness.

4. Your personal convenience as a factor dwindles into nothingness when you are confronted with the law of your State. The formulated will of the people is an infinitely

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bigger and more sacred thing than the whim of one man.

5. You, as a Church member, represent your Church in the eyes of the community. But every branch of the Church represented here has protested, through its national organization, against the open Sunday. If you, then, patronize the Sunday store, you injure the honor of the Church of Christ.

6. You, as a Church member, are doubly bound to observe the law. For you are openly pledged to obey not only the civil law but the moral law of God; and it would puzzle the cleverest lawyer to justify the man who, so pledged to observe a higher law, is found to be habitually breaking a lower one based upon the higher.

Think the matter over. It is not a small matter at all. It is the question of basic public morality; and on its answer hinges much of the future welfare of the town.

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Think it over; and see if it is not your part to take a higher stand.

Heartily yours,
The Dominie.

November 12.

Dear Man:

It did my heart good to hear you speak out in such fiery style during the discussion at the Men's Club. I wish more of our men felt so strongly about the evils that exist in our community. I have no patience with the man who never finds due provocation to whole-souled anger.

I like the stalwart doctrine of the Apostle: "Be ye angry—and sin not." This is rather startling, at first sight; yet the Bible not only preaches it but illustrates it times without number. On certain occasions God is pictured as filled with righteous

wrath. On similar occasions Jesus is shown exhibiting the same sort of anger—Jesus, meekest, mildest of men! Yet we are bidden to cultivate self-control, meekness, love. How can these things be reconciled?

The anger Jesus shows, the anger the Father reveals, the anger we are bidden to cultivate, is simply self-possessed, judicial indignation against moral evil. Such an emotion must be a part of any lofty and pure moral character. It is revealed to us as essential to the very character of God; and we are urged on to that moral height where we shall find it a part of our character too.

Furthermore—and this is the important point—we are to infer that the lack of ability to feel such righteous anger is a most lamentable lack. Its presence or absence, when occasion arises, is a striking and accurate test of the genuineness of our Christianity. “Do not tell me,” writes a keen

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student of human nature, "that a man loves virtue and purity, in whom a deed of shameful impurity and injustice awakens no moral revulsion."

It is proof of moral dulness or obliquity when one can pass by the wounded man on the Damascus road and feel no anger against those who have treated him so brutally. It is proof of the low level of our moral aspirations that we can accept without a single quiver of indignation the moral evils past which our steps lead daily, the age-old injustices which we still regard as integral parts of the social order, as our fathers regarded slavery.

One of the products of the Christian's new heart is inevitably this: the ability to feel just such a reasonable, righteous anger, not at personal injuries, but at the great moral evils infesting society. He who cannot hate a great wrong, who cannot flame

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out in honest wrath at it, like a Wilberforce or a Wendell Phillips, a Luther or a Knox, like Jesus himself, must come near to being looked upon by God as morally worthless.

It is characteristic, too, of such anger that it is no mere flash-in-the-pan. It is a fire that continues to burn while the evil that causes it continues to exist. Such a deep and virile emotion Browning had in mind when he cried:

“ . . . Endure no lie which needs your heart
And hand to push it out of mankind's path.”

Cordially,
The Dominie.

November 19.

My Friend:

I've been dipping again into the pathos of Robbie Burns; and I've found a most pathetic thing. When the poet dropped into

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a pew in a certain church he found nothing of the warmth he sought; and he wrote on the fly-leaf of a hymnal:

“As cauld a wind as ever blew;
As cauld a kirk, and in’t but few;
As cauld a minister’s e’er spak’:
Ye’s a’ be het ere I come back!”

And he went out. No one knows how greatly his sinful, broken life might have been changed, had he only found himself that day in a warm, welcoming, friendly atmosphere!

It so happened a few days ago that one of our workers, calling on a family of one-time church-goers, invited them to attend this church, and received from the good-wife the flat answer: “Oh, the churches are not for poor people.”

Also it so happened, not many days before that, that when I urged a man with a vicious

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habit to come to church, I received the answer, "Oh, they don't want fellows like me in church!"

Also it happened, during the winter, that I invited a man who had been having a hard time to keep the wolf from the door to come to church; and he said, "Oh, my clothes are too ragged. They don't want people like me in church!"

Also I have been hearing such remarks, off and on, ever since I entered the pastorate; and I do not like them, not because they are not sincere, but because they are. Don't tell me that these people who say such things are looking for excuses. They are not. They really have a feeling that the churches are not for them.

Is it so? So far as this church and ninety-eight other churches out of a hundred are concerned, it is decidedly not true. The Church is Christ's, instituted by Him

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for the distinct purpose of reaching and winning and developing and using—whom? All sorts and conditions of men, no less.

It is easy for the well-to-do churchgoer to sit back in his pew and say indignantly of these stay-at-homes, "What nonsense! Let 'em drop their pride!" It is not nonsense at all. Most of us, had we been in straitened circumstances for years, would have developed just as sensitive a cuticle. Most of us, receiving just one slight from the occasional snob found in church, would show to-day that we possessed far more pride than the man who does not feel in place in the church.

And it is easy to say that the church—this church—is a democratic institution. It is. There are in it people of every walk in life, of every grade of pocketbook. There are few churches whose membership roll will show as great a variety of occupations and

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incomes; and we take honest pride in the fact. But even so, is there not something yet to be done to make the man of whom I am thinking feel more at home here?

We can make church-going less of a dress-parade. There is, after all, no reason whatever for anything more than decent, quiet, unostentatious dress on the Lord's Day. Too many people excuse their silly pride in clothes on the plea that they dress thus in honor of God. Isaiah 3 and James 2 will help us to see how it is possible to let the glory of dress overshadow the glory of God.

And we can lay so much more emphasis on men's souls than on their purses that they will be more easily convinced of what is the truth: that it is the men, the souls, we want, and that we want them for Christ. It is the truth, but we have not always, nor all of us, shown it to the newcomer. As soon as the people of this church begin agonizing

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for souls for Jesus, just so soon will the poor man forget in this place the size of his purse.

And we can go out of our way to make every one feel that he has a place here. To be sure, we have been doing this; we can conscientiously say it; and the church has felt the benefit of this access of welcome and fellowship. This is the right road. Let us pursue it! But do not forget that the man we are speaking of is of all men in the world the quickest to discover when hospitality is assumed. It is the genuine article he craves—the heart, not only the hand, to welcome him.

We do not all dress alike, talk alike, or have the same tastes; we have not all committed the same sins; but we are all, nevertheless, sinners; and the church is for such. That church sins against Christ himself that is a “respector of persons” where Christ is not. If He, the Stainless, could eat and

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drink with gross sinners as well as with Pharisees, if He could spread out His arms in welcome to the Magdalen as gladly as to the rich young ruler, surely we, who are not (to say the least) stainless, can not afford to make distinctions, especially when we are under orders to deliver His message "to the whole creation."

Yours,

The Dominie.

November 26.

My Friend:

What years these have been, these last few! Another Thanksgiving season comes around, and for what, in this still seemingly chaotic world, shall national gratitude be expressed?

The one thing for which I am most profoundly grateful as an American is the

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vastly increased seriousness with which we are taking ourselves. I know that the cynics of Europe for many years sneered at our idealism, calling it mere sentimentalism. But I rejoice that on the one hand we have not merely retained but have more highly exalted our ideals since the Great War began, and that on the other hand Europe has looked to us, in pathetic reversal of her former attitude, as the one nation above others best fitted by its ideals and its very sentiments to serve the world in the long crisis.

You remember how we felt when the war began? From unqualified criticism of the aggressor we advanced quickly to an analysis of the life and ideals of all the nations represented in "the far-flung battle-lines." I soon gathered, from what I heard and read, that the average citizen came to the conclusion that by none of them had the

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title "Christian" been any too well won. And then the men with whom I talked, the papers I read, veered around, in their thinking, to the point where they began seriously to examine our American ideals and life, asking themselves soberly, "Are we, as a nation, any less guilty than these, our brethren, across the water?" "I tell you," said one man, a man of insight, to me (it was last Thanksgiving Day), "we are not a bit better than they."

Our Thanksgiving Day, coming to us at that time, was not at all inopportune. It provided for us another "quiet hour," in which, sobered, chastened by events overseas, we were forced to turn our eyes inward for the profitable study of ourselves as a nation. So, each year's Thanksgiving affords the same blessed privilege.

And there are few surely who now, more than a year or two ago, are so blind as not to

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see that the exalted position of a superior nation exempt from war's ravages by her righteous character is not for us to assume. We are tarred with the same brush that has tarred Europe. We live in a glass house, and can ill afford to throw stones across the ocean. Our national ideals have not been altogether Christian: we have assumed that compromise is necessary on many points; we have accepted with the humility of a Heep the confident assertions of our men in public life that "Christ's ideals are too chimerical for practical men to follow to the end."

It would be easy to point out our sins; there is no need. The most sobering consideration is not so much the thought of specific evils as the consciousness of a tendency, an atmosphere, that is not easily recognized as truly Christian. That spirit of pride, greed, self-righteousness, that has so revealed itself abroad, is found here at home.

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It is not easy to see that we are very different, in the general spirit of our national life, from the Christian nations that have been crucifying Christ anew on the battlefields of Europe. We call ourselves Christians; but

“A daw’s not counted a religious bird
Because he keeps a-cawing from a steeple.”

What Jesus demands of our nation to-day is the far more consistent practice of Christianity. And the fundamental principle that lies back of such practice is this: National recognition of the proposition that the standard of Christianity for a nation is not one whit lower than, or different from, the standard for a man. The acceptance or rejection of this principle is, I believe, the touchstone that proves a nation Christian or non-Christian.

I said that I was glad that we were nearer to realizing our ideals. I am not incon-

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sistent. I believe that; but I believe that there are many more steps to take. Europe is right in one criticism: conceit is our weakness. We *are* a Christian nation, just as the individual, though a sinner, may be a Christian man; but like the individual, the nation must climb St. Augustine's ladder. You know what that means.

Faithfully yours,
The Dominie.

December 3.

Dear Friend:

I have gone back to my boyhood, reading again, or rather devouring, the story of David Livingstone. You ought to dig into it; you'll be sure to dig your way through. The extracts from his diaries are the best parts—show up the man, lonely, pathetic,

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gifted with a prophet's vision and a martyr's devotion.

Livingstone, like Dan Crawford of later day, learned to think not only "black" but deep, during those long years in the tall grass of central Africa. Among the many pithy sayings of those diaries of his there is one that is well worth stamping on our mental tablets. Here it is:

"One ought to endeavor to devote the peculiarities of his nature, whatever they may be, to the Redeemer's service."

That pierces pretty deep into the nature of our self-dedication to the cause of our Lord and Master. We commonly offer to Him the usual, the commonplace elements of ourselves; but what of the unusual? the odd? the peculiar?

Suppose—just suppose—that you have a violent temper. What an easy thing to offer Jesus all but that temper! to leave it

still violent, still uncontrolled, still master! But to give to Him that temper, tying it down, subduing, controlling, mastering, till you find that you have at last put at your Lord's disposal not an unwieldy, unfit thing, but a powerful, determined will, under control and useful in His work—what a fine gift is this! You have made of your uncouth peculiarity a valuable asset for Christ.

Or suppose—we are merely supposing—that your peculiarity is of some other sort, a queerness, an oddity, which has marked you as “peculiar” in your own eyes and, as you perhaps rightly think, in the eyes of others. The same process can be gone through with, you shaping and getting into proper control that which has seemed to be an obstacle in your way, until of it you have made, again, an asset for Christ.

We are too sensitive about our peculiarities, and too well used to regarding them as

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obstructions to our usefulness, useless in themselves. Livingstone managed, by the grace of God, to turn some of his unlovely qualities into lovely ones, some of his apparently bad qualities into good ones. His method was simple; he gave himself to God, entirely to God; and he endeavored to make every side of his nature serve God.

A good program to follow! There is a scarcity of people who are not possessed of some unlovely, unfit habits or characteristics. You remember what the old Quaker said to his wife: "All the world's peculiar except thee and me; and sometimes I have doubts of thee." All of us are needing this Livingstonian, or better, Christian, discipline! It will take patience and prayer and humility and good courage; but who doubts that it is well worth while "to devote the peculiarities of his nature, whatever they may be, to the Redeemer's service"? What a lot

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of energy, now misspent, would be turned into right channels if all our unruly tempers were harnessed for Christ! What a volume of speech and song for Him, if all the peculiar, gossiping tongues were trained to celestial speech! What a tremendous object lesson of the power of Christ, if physical weakness or peculiarity or pain were devoted to the Redeemer's service!

Paul accomplished this with his infirmity, whatever that was; somehow he made that infirmity work for Christ. Livingstone did it. We can do it, with the help of Christ. Sincerely,

The Dominie.

December 10.

My Friend:

May I tell you something?

I am heartily sick of hearing our people adopt the apologetic tone.

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We—I include the dominie with the rest—do altogether too much of that sort of thing.

There is no such tone in your voice when you invite some one to your house, or to the “movies,” or to a club meeting. You urge it, heartily, enthusiastically. Here is something good; and you want them to share in it.

But so many of us take a different tone in speaking of anything religious. We are deeply embarrassed if religion be touched upon in conversation, and we gently turn the subject. What nonsense! The most truly religious people are just like children in that religion is to them the natural thing, not out of place anywhere. Moreover, you will find no other topic so weighty, so profitable.

We evade the embarrassing use of the names “God” and “Jesus” by circumlocu-

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tions. We are willing to talk about "the Lord," strange to say, when we hesitate to bring Jesus in by name.

And we adopt the same tone in asking a friend or neighbor to come to church, as if to say, "Of course, I know it's a bother to you to get started; and I appreciate the fact that the gospel does not compare with the Sunday paper; and it may be the minister's off-day; but, if you have nothing better to do, and if it's a good day, and if you get up early, I hope you'll come." Who would come if such words invited him? Yet they are implied in the tone and casual nature of our invitation.

So, too, we apologize when we talk personal religion with a man, and this in so many words: "I know I am intruding, old man, but just let me get in a word. . . ."

Or else our apology takes another form: we simply avoid direct approach to religion,

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but we invite the man to the Men's Club, or the woman to the Ladies' Aid, "to get acquainted"—and then we stop.

This will never do! Is your church a thing to be ashamed of? Is the gospel to be apologized for? Is Jesus to be carefully disguised when you introduce Him to your friends? Let us cease apology. Your Saviour, your faith, your Church, your Bible, your Christian friends—none needs any such thing. It is time for us to show our neighbors that we have the greatest thing in the world, which they, too, should have. Out in the West cities have been transformed by what you smile at as "Booster Clubs." Ah, but there's good psychology back of the "booster" idea, the same truth that lies back of good salesmanship. When people act and speak with pride and enthusiasm, others are impressed.

Tell us, what degree of conviction and

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zeal do men detect in your voice when you speak for Christ?

“Jesus, and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless days?

“Ashamed of Jesus! Yes, I may
When I’ve no guilt to wash away,
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save.

“Till then—nor is my boasting vain—
Till then I boast a Saviour slain!
And, oh, may this my glory be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me!”

Faithfully yours,
The Dominie.

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December 17.

Good Friend:

For weeks past the postman and the expressman and the newspaper have advised us that Christmas is coming. For that matter, the planning and whispering, the locking of drawers and closets, the amazing busy-ness of the youngsters and oldsters in our own homes, would have been sufficient to remind the dullest of its happy approach.

My mind has been dwelling on one of the great anomalies of the season. For, strange to say, there are some people in this Christian land to whom Christmas, instead of lightening burdens, brings heavier ones. We think of it as the one happiest day in the year.

“Carol, carol, Christians,
Carol joyfully!”

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We expect to see nothing but happy faces, wreathed in smiles.

But there are some who will heave a sigh of genuine relief when Christmas is over for another year.

Who are they?

Some are shop-girls, errand-boys, clerks, delivery men, postmen, package tiers, scrub-women—shall I go on? They flinch from the thought of the “holiday season.” They think at once of late hours and early hours, of a rush that leaves no time for meals, of solid weeks of breathless haste and unbroken weariness. And all because you and I and the rest will insist on putting off our Christmas shopping until the day is upon us. If you want to give such people a better feeling about Christmas, you ought to put aside your convenience and consult theirs. A little careful planning, a little sacrifice, and you will have done your part

in lightening their Christmas burdens. At Christmas-time our procrastination is the thief not only of our time but of other folk's treasures of health and strength.

Then there are the unhappy people to whom Christmas gifts are a sort of social function, to be sacredly attended to at any cost. How they scheme and skimp; how neatly they pass on year-old undesirables (with the aid of the eraser); how they groan under the obligation to send Mrs. X. a present because she sent them one last year! What silly, nerve-racking, superficial business this is! No wonder Christmas is a bugbear, with all the heart taken out of it in this fashion. The cure? Sincerity, nothing less.

And then among the unhappy ones are the men and women who, holding the purse-strings that confine moderate incomes, yet feel bound to give gifts far beyond their

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means in number and price. What a lot of this there is! People with a \$1,500 income suddenly, for the week before Christmas, living, so far as purchases go, at a \$5,000 rate; and the \$5,000 people spending money—or “charging it”—at a princely rate! And then the reckoning! Bills run up only to be paid in dribblets through the spring; other bills delayed to give these the right of way; worry and care a-plenty into the bargain. Christmas a joy? Not for these people! The cure? Simplicity, nothing less.

There is something for us all in the spectacle of people who do not feel unalloyed joy in the thought of Christmas. God keep us from being of their number and from contributing to the causes of their lack of joy at Christmas-time.

Cordially,
The Dominie.

December 24.

My Friend:

Do you remember the name our early Anglo-Saxon ancestors gave to the day on which they celebrated the birth of Jesus? "Christ's Mass" they called it. The very meaning of the words sets it above all ordinary holidays and festivals.

Christmas is a holiday. There is no festival known to our civilization that is so rich in social customs and pleasures. All Christendom tries to reach home before Christmas! It means reunion, gifts, kindnesses, smiling faces, happy hearts; it conjures up visions of a table groaning with good things, a row of stockings stuffed out to grotesqueness, a tree glittering and blazing and topped by Santa Claus.

But did it ever occur to you that most of our Christmas customs have come to us

from heathenism? When Christianity conquered the Roman Empire it adopted and transformed, for its use at Christmas-time, some of the old Roman customs. When the missionary of the Cross penetrated the forests of Germany he found our ancestors keeping their great Yule festival at the time of the winter solstice, when, as they thought, the gods of earth and air began to stir into life again as the fiery sun-wheel began to return towards spring. And the preacher of Christ, while he won these forefathers of ours, borrowed their Yule-tide customs and cleansed them and transformed them. Back of our Christmas feast, our Christmas-tree, our Christmas plays and pantomimes, our Christmas carols, there is the story of a wonderfully beautiful transformation of things heathen, unclean, to the service of Christ on Christmas day. The very social customs and pleasures of your Christmas

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(your Christmas dinner included) are eloquent of the power of your Saviour.

And Christmas is a holy day. That is the original meaning of the word "holiday," and it holds true in regard to Christmas. It is a holy day. It is a day of good feeling, of merriment; it is rightly our great social festival for high and low, rich and poor; but it is more: it is the day which commemorates the birth of our Saviour. There is a contagious happiness about the season in which all people share; but there is a peculiar happiness about it in which only those who know Jesus and love Him can share.

It is surprising, when one stops to think, how much of mere sentiment can be given to Him and to his Birthday, while everything beyond sentiment is withheld. To feel the heart stirred by the sweet harmonies of Christmas carols; to be moved to an un-

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wonted benevolence; to feel a vague, unaccustomed, yet not unpleasant, exaltation of spirit for a fortnight—this is very far from the tribute Jesus asks and deserves. To bring our reverent and kindly sentiments out for a Christmas airing, and no more? To become temporary Scrooges—renovated, but for the holidays only? Surely this is but worthless sentimentality if this is all.

A Merry Christmas to you! And may it be the kind of merriment that springs from a heart that has good right to be joyful, a heart right with God and man. The cheeriest handshake, the brightest smile, the sincerest greeting, the heartiest laugh, at this season of laughter and good cheer, should be his who has interchanged gifts with his Father, receiving the unspeakable Gift that was given on Christmas Day, and giving in turn the incalculable gift of self. May they be yours!

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"I have brought to thee, down from my home
above,

Salvation full and free, my pardon and my
love.

Great gifts I brought to thee;

What hast thou brought to Me?

"Oh, let thy life be given, thy years for Me
be spent;

World-fetters all be riven, and joy with suf-
fering blent.

I gave myself for thee;

Give thou thyself to Me!"

Cordially,

The Dominie.

December 31.

My dear Friend:

Here we are at the year's end, facing the
unknown, like a certain ancient traveller
with whom you are acquainted.

Paul is at the wharf. The elders of the

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church of Ephesus have walked the thirty-six miles to Miletus to say good-by. They are afraid for his future; but he is not afraid: "Now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me that . . . bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course."

The last bale and cask are aboard. Paul, rising from his knees, tears himself from the tearful embrace of his friends and steps on deck. The gangplank is withdrawn—"Cast off!" So Paul sails into the future.

In much the same way we ought to begin the year.

The ship is getting under way; willy-nilly, we are passengers; and we know not what lies before us. The future, even the morrow, is hidden. Bonds and afflictions

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may await us too; or the more insidious trials of prosperity and ease may lie before us!

But, while we're casting off, what of the old year? Few can speak as confidently as Paul of the record of the past—"serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, with tears, with trials, shrinking not." We have made a muddle of the old year. It has a sorry tale to tell of unfinished work, of wasted energies, of follies and sins. What of it? Just this: set it right, and at once, with God. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Let's start the new year with no uncomfortable past as luggage.

And for the unknown before us? Just what Paul did: go straight ahead into it, whatever may come, "holding not our life of any account as dear unto ourselves, so that we may accomplish our course." There's Paul's secret: the future held no terrors

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for him: the mystery of the unknown did not blanch his cheek; he could board ship and head into any weather with perfect confidence, because he was on the path of duty. His Lord had ordered him aboard; and, dark as the future was, aboard Paul went cheerily. There can be nothing to dread in the new year for him who enters on it with the determination to serve Christ through it all.

“I know not what awaits me;
God kindly veils my eyes;
And o’er each step of my onward way
He makes new scenes to rise;
And every joy He sends me comes
A sweet and glad surprise.

“I see not a step before me
As I tread on another year;
But the past is in God’s keeping,
The future His love shall clear;

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And what looks dark in the distance
May brighten as I draw near.

"So on I go, not knowing;
I would not if I might;
I'd rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light;
I'd rather walk by faith with Him
Than go alone by sight."

If conscience be clear and you be bent
on the Lord's business, no need to wish you
a Happy New Year: it will surely come.

So, throughout the New Year, old friend,
"the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord
make his face to shine upon you and be
gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his
countenance upon you and give you peace."

Sincerely your friend,

The Dominie.

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